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"A Tiger and a Sleeping Leopard" by George Stubbs, an engraving of the original painting, reproduced in the major retrospective of Stubbs' work at the Tate Gallery until January 6 next year (and subsequently to be seen at the Yale Center for British Art from February 13 to April 7, 1985). Reproduced in its catalogue (248pp. Tate Gallery, £21.00, paperback, £8.95, 0 946390 12 5). The exhibition will be reviewed in a feature of the TLS.

The knower as actor

R.W.B. Lewis

HOWARD M. FEINSTEIN
Becoming William James
347pp. Cornell University Press. \$24.95.
0 8014 1617 5

Informed discussion of the several illustrious Jameses continues apace, and has now grown into something like a permanent feature of the American cultural scene, one of the ways by which that scene declares itself. The development in Jamesian studies has been from individual biographies which established the lives and identities - of the philosopher William by Gey Wilson Allen, the novelist Henry by Leon Edel, and their sister Alice by Jean Strouse - to works that explore patterns of relation between family members, between parents and children and among the siblings. F. O. Matthiessen handsomely led the way in this regard, with his *The James Family* of 1947 (re-issued not long since), an anthology of the family's writings with searching interstitial commentary.

More recently there have been laudable efforts, to part successful, to re-read Henry James's fiction as enacting a "pragmatic" or "phenomenological" rhythm, a kind of narrative sluttering, akin to and perhaps hooded down from his brother William's philosophical procedures. Now, Howard M. Feinstein, Professor of Psychology at Cornell University, argues that William James became whatever he did become almost entirely out of the fierce and manifold dynamics of family life over three generations.

The work reflects years and prodigies of research. No slightest stone, so far as one can make out, was left unturned; it is a big undertaking, from which the most avid Jacobite will have something to learn. Professor Feinstein's thesis takes him back to the founder of the American branch, William James of Albany so called, the penniless Irish immigrant, whose intricate financial dealings to upstate New York made him, at his death in 1832, one of the two or three richest men in the country. This William's sometimes shady transactions are here sorted out for the first time; and Feinstein also, if not quite so lucidly, follows the history of the grandfather's will and its harsh, Presbyterian and, as it turned out, non-legal attempts to delay or forbid his heirs' inheritance.

The author places on view for us more than two dozen sketches by the titular William between 1859 and 1873, most of them never before made visible, and all of them, as will be noted, of main importance to Feinstein's argument. No less illustrative of that argument is the moving five-page "Family Album" he has laid out: photographs of Henry James Senior, his wife Mary, and their five children (for the younger brothers Wilky and Bob, Civil War soldiers and post-war wanderers, have their part to play too in this family story), as they aged, grew and changed from the 1850s to the 1890s.

Though it glances ahead to the philosopher's later career, *Becoming William James* ends, effectively, with William coming back to America from Europe in 1874 at the age of thirty-two, ready to take up an appointment to teach physiology and anatomy at Harvard and convinced that he was at last "in a permanent path", with a long-range plan fixed in his mind, and feeling "uncommonly strong". The substance of Feinstein's biographical study is the slow process by which, through anguish and illness and a hundred ideocisions and revisions, William arrived at that stage.

The complex central thesis, or structure, has been thoroughly thought out and powerfully argued. I must attempt a short summary, though it will be woefully inadequate. The dark drama began when William of Albany at the third of his six surviving sons, the one who would be known as Henry Senior, out of any savor to his 3 million-dollar estate; and this because young Henry had misbehaved at nearby Union College, had fled the same for a period and later had flouted his father's desire that he study law. The testamentary treatment, Feinstein believes, was a source of lifelong shame for Henry. It gave him an image of himself as "a rejected prodigal", and provided the enabling parable for the whole of Henry Senior's philosophical and religious vision, worked out in a dozen abstruse treatises amounting to an "ideology for a prodigal".

In Act II, we are in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Henry Senior is married and the father of five; the family home is in Newport. The brilliant and lively oldest child, William, is keen to pursue a career in painting and shows signs of real talent. But the father, oddly imitating his parent, moves to thwart his son's ambition and sends him to another direction. "Despite his liberal protestations", Feinstein writes, "Henry was determined to force William into science, no matter how strongly his son felt a painter's calling." In the spring of 1861, Henry Senior put a stop to William's apprenticeship in a Newport studio, and an end

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once and for all to William's artistic calling, by feigning a serious illness (if I read Feinstein aright) and threatening suicide if the boy would not come to heel. A few months later William entered a scientific school at Harvard, and scientific and medical study were to be his lot through the foreseeable future.

But William's yearning towards art did not abate; and the consequences for him, wrenched between filial duty and personal longing, were disastrous. For a decade and more he suffered a series of physical and nervous illnesses, and for several years succumbed to near invalidism (Feinstein is especially perceptive about this). He could stick to nothing. He left Harvard medical school to join an expedition to Brazil and try his hand at zoology; and departed a second time to spend a year in Germany, where, between thoughts of suicide, he changed universities and courses of study by the season or the month. From Berlin in 1868, he entered into an epistolary debate with his father about metaphysics and questions of vocation. "Despite the deep affection and respect of the combatants", says Feinstein, "the duel would end tragically."

It would end, that is, in the nightmare experience - Feinstein dates it (wrongly, by my reckoning) in 1872 - undergone by William in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, family home, when he was seized and reduced to panic fear by the hallucinatory image of himself as an epileptic idiot. From that ghastly moment, William managed to inch his way back to sanity, and two years later was resuming the teaching and study of science by his own choice. Troubled times might still be in store, but William had at the least, in a later saying, become his own man and not merely his father's manipulated son. Philosophy was looming as his true interest, and somewhere in the far distance lay *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Pragmatism*.

It is a fascinating if almost unrelievedly gloomy tale that Feinstein tells us, and I have to say that I would debate it at a number of points. In my view (that phrase should be heard accompanying most of what follows), the impact upon Henry Senior of his temporary disinheritance - he was restored to financial grace by court order in December 1836 - is greatly exaggerated. Feinstein speaks of the event as the "father's shame", his "shameful secret", something he rigorously kept hidden from his children, though "his shame is evident throughout the writings of a lifetime". But I can find few traces of any such feeling at any

time on the part of Henry Senior, nor can I see why shame should enter into it; sustained anger was the fitter and the more detectable emotion. There is no doubting that the father's cosmic vision arose belatedly from his personal experience and filial attitude; but rather from a passionate mingling of his parent and the Calvinist God than from having been stripped of his share in the property.

Henry Senior's resistance to William's artistic bent, moreover, sprang less from a hostility to art as such than from a distrust of any career choice as inhibiting the expansion of a person's being. The younger Henry, recalling the exchange about art, cited his father's "prime uneasiness" in the presence of a vocational tendency because it "dispensed with any suggestion of an alternative". Indeed and typically, when the sixteen-year-old Henry was thought to be reading too many novels, his father hurried him into a polytechnical school in Geneva; where the boy failed steadily until allowed to transfer to a literary course in the Academy. Instead of picking a single line of work, Henry Junior would put it, "What we were to do was just to be something, something unconnected with specific doing, something free and uncommitted."

Feinstein's contention that Henry Senior "threatened illness and suicide" in 1861 to blackmail William away from art and towards science strikes me as a highly inventive reading of a letter from the father to his older brother. At the same time, Feinstein demonstrates, for me beyond dispute, that William in 1859-60 was in a state of extreme turmoil, possibly about the artistic business. The demonstration takes the form of skilled, subtle analyses of sketches made by William in this period; here Feinstein (who is a practising psychiatrist) is on his own professional ground, and firm ground it is. The sketches, as he lets us see, reveal a preoccupation with abnormal and even mythic violence; with ferocity and destruction, with humans pursued and devoured by beasts and ogres, or struck dumb by wizards. They quiver with the emotions of fury and terror. This was a disturbed young man (and analysed drawings from the next dozen years show similarly intense, and contradictory impulses).

But as the decade of the 1860s went forward, the problem that really tormented William, it seems to me, was not a felt conflict between his personal aesthetic inclinations and his father's wishes. It was uncertainty about his own nature: whether he were capable of a life of

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POLLY LONGSWORTH
Austin and Mabel: The Amherst affair and love letters of Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd
449pp. Faber. £18.50.
0 374 10716 5

action, or should accept the role of passive observer. In Brszil, in 1865, after reading about some adventurous explorers, he wrote to his father a bit dispiritedly: "I am convinced now, for good, that I am cut out for a speculative rather than an active life." At his worst and lowest moment on February 1, 1870, William summed up the issue in his diary: "I... perceive plainly that I must face the choice with open eyes: shall I frankly throw the moral business overboard, as one unused to my innate aptitudes, or shall I follow it, and it alone, making everything else mere stuff for it." Feinstein misreads this passage by supposing that "The moral business" was the wilful forcing of himself in the direction defined by his sense of duty. Quite the contrary, the moral business for William James had to do with the energetic exercise of his free and individual will.

This was the entire point and thrust of the much-quoted journal entry of a couple of months later in 1870. I quote from it, perforce, selectively. After announcing that he had decided to accept the definition of free will by the French philosopher Charles Renouvier — "the sustaining of a thought because I choose to when I might have other thoughts" — William went on:

My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will. For the remainder of the year, I will abstain from the mere speculation and contemplative *Grübeleien* [ruminations] in which my nature takes delight, and voluntarily cultivate the feeling of moral freedom, by reading books about it as well as acting... Not in maxims, not in *Ausgewählte* [contemplations], but in accumulated acts of thought lies salvation... I will posit life... in the self-governing resistance of the ego to the world.

Real thinking was thus itself a mode of action — it consisted in "acts of thought" — and "moral freedom" (which was another way of saying "free will") was a cognitive phenomenon: with these determinations William found the way out of his inner wrangling. A few years later, he was identifying himself boldly in an essay about Herbert Spencer: "The knower must involve himself in the world with no foot-holds, no crutches, and no passive, waiting, order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor" — the knower, in his intellectual activity, helps make and mould the truth about the world and man.

I would not deny for a moment that William's "problem", as here formulated, had its origins in the father-son relation. One of the most incontestable statements in *Becoming William James* is that William journeyed towards himself "within the territory defined by his father's map, guided by his own set of meanings". But what was at stake was the nature of his nature. William needed to see himself as an actor and to assert his resistant ego in the face of a father who with all vigour, and for the rescue of the soul, preached the necessary "vastation" or effacement of wilful selfhood.

To be sure, so essentially humanistic an interpretation of the matter can always be rebutted by saying that William may have believed he sought after this or intended the other, but what was actually at work was the hidden battle (generations, within Feinstein's metaphors, are engaged in unceasing warfare) between an art-loving son and a ruthless father. It can be confessed too that others, some of my most gifted students among them, have perceived Henry Senior exactly as does Feinstein, as a monster of selfishness and paternal shoving, a lifelong fatality to his young ones.

The latter, of course, expressed views almost entirely remote from that. "You are the same dear old good-for-nothing homeick papa as ever" was the way his daughter Alice addressed him in 1860, and Henry spoke to William in 1885 about "the pathetic, tragic inefficiency of poor Father's lifelong effort". William, in a letter read over the father's grave on the first day of 1883, said: "All my intellectual life I derive from you." But William James was the most open-minded of modern thinkers, the most receptive to differing theories and judgments. The best and truest thing one could say about the richly provocative *Becoming William James* is that William, while perhaps raising an eyebrow here and there, would have welcomed it and praised it lavishly. William recognized energy of mind when he saw it.

For this is a love story. As one (admittedly partial) witness, Millicent Todd Bingham, recorded in her diary (for March 27, 1951): "The effect on Emily? She was glad that Austin had found some comfort after his all but ruined life. In my mother's words: 'Emily always respected real emotion'." Certainly it seems as if Emily protected her brother's affair at the expense of her sister-in-law, her one-time idol, whom she had once saluted as an elemental force, fronting "the Gulf Stream", "an Avalanche of Sun!" Thirty years earlier she had seemed half in love with her, penning lyrically passionate notes to "dear Susie". Even now she admitted: "With the exception of Shakespeare, you have told me of more knowledge than anyone living



David and Mabel Todd, Amherst, 1907: reproduced from the book reviewed here.

— To say that sincerely is strange praise." But the goddess evaded her. Emily remained baffled by "Sister Sue" next door:

But Susan is a stranger yet —
The Ones who cite her most
Have never scented her Haunted House
Nor compromised her Ghost —
To play those who know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her know her less
The nearer they get —

(This was the kind of correspondence that passed from the Dickinson Homestead to the Evergreens before Austin's and Mabel's letters.) Now Vinole (Lavinia) and Emily and Mabel were exchanging notes and flowers. Occasionally Mabel would play the piano and sing for Emily, but she would not see her. "My brother is with us so often each day," Emily remarked, "we almost forgot he ever passed to a wedded Home." Austin even thought of showing Mabel's love letters to her and when Mabel was in Europe she wrote to ask her to "Touch Shakespeare for me", signing herself enigmatically "America". At her funeral Mrs Todd, her future editor, dressed in black, stood by her white coffin, strewn with violets and ground pine by Susan Dickinson.

Dickinsons apart, however, there is much else that is fascinating — such as the material recently mined by Peter Gay for his first volume of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (TLS, August 17, 1984). For over thirty years Mabel kept track of her menstrual cycle, noting her "safe" and fertile periods. She developed a code (in her diaries) to detail not only her orgasms but her husband's withdrawals at "unsafe" times which allowed her, once she had taken Austin Dickinson as a lover, to maintain regular intercourse with two men. Austin's diary, too, kept a record of full intercourse, (symbolized =). When the diaries are matched, writes Mrs Longworth, "it appears that during 1884 Mabel was making love with David an average of eight times a month, and with Austin twelve, about half of all these occasions involving full intercourse and most of those clustered during the last ten days of Mabel's menstrual cycle, which she considered her safe period." Austin had long ago ceased having sexual relations with his wife, Susan, and by the end of 1884 Mabel stopped for good her record of relations with her husband David. It seems that her relations with him nearly ceased in 1887.

But it is not clinical details alone that are of interest in this context. It is the human drama which Longworth has so skilfully unfolded. What did Mabel's husband think? What about Austin's wife and children? What about the academic community of Amherst College? How did the interested parties of adulterers a century ago align themselves? This was no fiction by a William Dean Howells or Henry James; this, for all its self-conscious infatuation, was the real thing. Susan Dickinson, for one, was angry. She was not fooled by the use of the dining-room next door. She grew cool, withdrawn, developing a vindictive streak to humiliate a variety of harmless victims. Austin and Mabel called her the "Power", or (in mourning for her younger son) the "Great Black Mogul". David Todd, to the contrary, was starchy-eyed, chiding after eclipses on distant continents or whiting away the night at his observatory. His role was that of the pensive philanthropist, whose devotion to Mabel remained unadulterated. "My David, my David Darling!" she addressed him; they enclosed unsealed notes to each other's lovers in their letters. It seems that Austin's consummation with Mabel took place with David's concurrence. As she recorded at the time in her diary:

And all the time my dear David & I are very happy & tender & devoted companions. My married life is certainly exceptionally sweet & peaceful & satisfying, & [David's] nature is just the one to soothe & rest me. I love him better all the time, and appreciate him more.

Or again: "David is superb through it all. He is a truly remarkable person." Eventually it became a *ménage à trois*, with Mabel, David and Austin spending hours companionably together. Ten times the symbol = in Austin's diary is accompanied by the notation "a witness": all but one were Sunday evenings spent at the Todd home. Austin patronized David as "the little man" or "our mutual friend", yet the two men confided in each other and seem to have become genuinely fond of each other.

Mabel was born in 1856, the same year that Susan and Austin Dickinson were married. She arrived in Amherst soon after their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. (Her father and Austin were of exactly the same age.) Two years later she considered herself married to him, in the sight of God, and was wearing his wedding ring on her right hand. Somehow this lawyer son of a lawyer, who succeeded his father as treasurer of the College and became the pillar of his community, managed to maintain the façade of his family life without causing a scandal. It was an extraordinary feat; for his professional mask hid a sensitive, soaring soul. He was every bit Emily's brother, in fact, enacting in life what she conceived in her poetry. "You speak it most reverently — are my Christ," wrote to Mabel. "God reveals Himself to me through you, and in you. You lift me to the highest reach of my being, and in that extreme tension I thrill to your exquisite influence to the very verge of heart breaking." No wonder Mabel's mother thought Austin and his sisters cynical and irreligious people.

The publication of Emily Dickinson's poems, first and second series, was Mabel's triumph. It is she who had traced Emily's difficult hand and copied the poems on a typewriter. It was entirely her enthusiasm and social charm that coaxed so many letters from friends and relations for her to transcribe. For that alone she is owed an enduring debt. But Austin, being twice her age, predeceased her. Her public display of mourning (wearing a black cape and hat with a crepe veil about town) roused hostile comment. Austin's secret will in her favour was disregarded. Even Vinole, her favourite, turned against her. Like all good soap operas, the story ends with a trial which Mabel (ignominiously and unjustly) lost. It is kinder to end by recalling her triumphant years when hand in hand with Austin, his "angel wife", she chanted in unison: "For my beloved is mine, and I am his. What can we want besides? Nothing!" A slip of paper, bearing the strange word "AMUASBTBLN" was found tucked into her diary at December 13, 1883 (the date of her consummation with Austin). Another slip, bearing the same letters, was in Austin's wallet when he died. The word is composed by alternately merging the letters of Austin's and Mabel's names.

The Messiah of the market

John Dunn

JOHN GRAY
Hayek on Liberty
230pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.
0 85520710 8

Every victim of a good modern education is awash with beliefs about the condition, actual or ideal, of society. Few such victims lead lives so sheltered that they are unaware of the gaps between what is and what, to their view, ought to be. Since modern societies are so heavily governed, the most natural expression of our consequent disappointment is the proposal that the government of the society in question (or some appropriate successor) should act to impose an approved order upon the existing and deplorable disarray. Hence, to be sure, over the decades and at their respective levels, the Welfare State, Socialism and the journal *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. But hence also the riot, disruption and industrial hatred we have at present. It is not easy for even the clearest-headed to judge quite how we should see all this. One academic answer, more fashionable some decades ago, was to affect to be above it all, deploying with whatever historic prowess one could muster the soothing rituals of the sciences of society or linguistic philosophy. A second answer, more popular in recent years among social scientists and philosophers, has been to plunge vociferously into the mêlée and lay on for all one is worth. Each answer has of course been adopted by oodles by many talented and admirable persons. But in retrospect neither of the two postures suggests a very commanding understanding of what has in fact been going on in modern history or a cogitatively very impressive conception of the role which the activity of thinking can usefully play in shaping social life.

Friedrich August von Hayek has a number of claims on current intellectual and political attention. It is the most grandiose of these claims, the claim that Hayek more than any other modern thinker has made a systematic attempt to identify the role which human thought can usefully play in shaping our social life, which furnishes the central theme of John Gray's book. Brief though it is, *Hayek on Liberty* does not quite match the terseness and lucidity of his previous study of John Stuart Mill. But it is in many ways a more engaged work: challoaguing, ambivalent, ultimately inconclusive, and of the most vivid interest.

In the quarter-century following the end of the Second World War it was common for British intellectuals to consider Hayek as little better than a reactionary crank, exhorting every major local step towards a more humane and civilized society. Since Mrs Thatcher came to power, he has more than had his revenge — wrote to Mabel. "God reveals Himself to me through you, and in you. You lift me to the highest reach of my being, and in that extreme tension I thrill to your exquisite influence to the very verge of heart breaking." No wonder Mabel's mother thought Austin and his sisters cynical and irreligious people.

Short Flight

As our hypothetical flight continues and the sunset's lovely slide show begins its introduction
To the lecture of night, we can glimpse through the scrim
Of lingerie-coloured clouds the patterns of the utopia
We are leaving: the looms of a million Penelopes,
The lawns, the jewelled pawnshops, lotus pools
and libraries — all the emblematic paraphernalia of our consensus
Shrunk to the dimensions of a sheet of foolscap.
Then, whack, the window must be shuttered,
For the flight attendant has announced the evening's dream.
Which will be the one we've already seen, years ago,
On TV, but never mind, it's free, and there is complimentary wine
To ease our transition to where, amazingly,
We have already arrived, home to the movies and our lives.

TOM DISCH

pull together a full explanation (and hence a full refutation) of one great overarching modern folly. We are apparently soon to be presented with a definitive statement of his conclusions: a three-volume testament, *The Fatal Conceit: The intellectual error of Socialism*.

But if he learnt remarkably early what it was that he was against, and if he has held to his central judgment with an impressive tenacity, Hayek remains a deeply paradoxical thinker. It is curious, for example, as Gray himself acknowledges, for a critic of rationalist system-building to be praised for becoming a uniquely systematic liberal thinker. It is a trifle unsettling for a self-avowed pragmatist to be so intensely moralistic. It is little short of bizarre for a thinker who sees in the workings of human society both a mechanism of evolutionary adaptation and an epistemological filter to attribute so much of what he finds unwelcome in modern history to a single intellectual error. (What this last point shows most plainly is the incoherence of Hayek's conception of the relations between coercive power and the development of belief in the world today, as indeed throughout recorded history.)

What makes Hayek a thinker of major importance is not, in the end, the scope of his intellectual ambitions. A uniquely systematic attempt to understand does not guarantee a uniform degree of success in understanding. Some parts of Hayek's system go very uneasily with other parts. Some parts, even on Gray's determinedly charitable account, are extremely vague or more than a little confused in the first place: notably Hayek's interpretation of the implications of human dependence on a necessarily largely un-self-aware practical sagacity and his conception (or absence of a conception) of the precise mechanisms through which social life supposedly fosters cognitive progress and favours beliefs which converge on the truth. In contrast with this ungainly sprawl, it is to his vision of the nature and merits of the market and in his savage and imaginative assault on the whole idea of economic planning that the force of Hayek's thought lies. Here, as even some Marxist students of socialist planning have begun to acknowledge, there is something immensely important about which Hayek has proved to be essentially right and the *bien pensant* opinion of almost half a century alarmingly astray.

It is not, however, at all easy to pin down precisely what he has proved to be right about. Here Gray's open partisanship offers us little help. To claim, for example, that "we cannot graft a socialist distributational system on the stem of free market production" is simply absurd. It may in Hayek's eyes be spiritually improper to do so. It may well in most people's eyes prove in due course to be practically imprudent to have done so. But not only can we readily do so; we have in fact been doing just this for quite some time. Both as epistemological filters and as mechanisms of selective adaptation, even indeed as repositories of the tacit knowledge of their enfranchised populations, most representative democracies for

most of the twentieth century have been moving fairly steadily in this direction. True, this movement has had some massively unpopular, unintended consequences (and, because it has done so, many representative democracies, under roughly the same impulses, have recently gone some distance into reverse). But it does not take an acute political sensitivity to appreciate that this reverse movement in its turn is likely to have fairly drastic unintended consequences. And so on.

As a political project Hayek's advocacy of the market is not merely a triumphantly rationalist construction; it is also heroically, almost quixotically, extreme. Since in his eyes it is market exchange which is uniquely capable of linking human populations benignly together on the largest scale both nationally and internationally, and since in their intuitive consciousness most citizens of the modern world (as in earlier ages) regard the market's workings with suspicion and intermittent resentment, as well as with an active eye to the main chance, they must somehow be saved from themselves: forced to be free. Where Edmund Burke set himself to defend the unreflective substance of society against revolutionary doctrines of natural right, for Hayek it is the market, the great primeval contract of eternal exchange, that "is to be looked on with other reverence". But where is the reverence to come from?

Here the full forlornness of Hayek's position comes into focus. If it is hard to imagine the majority of economists coming to believe that the unmolested market is in fact best equipped to handle externalities and the supply of most public goods, it is considerably harder to see how one could rationally expect it to win the allegiance of most Western citizens in the face of their tacit (and game-theoretically irrefragable) policy of doing their utmost to have their cake and eat it — and of the bewildering variety of practices in which this policy is now embodied. The only plausible political solution, accordingly, is to arrange to have their reverence provided for them by their rulers. But even for the latter, at least in representative democracies, the policies of massive and unflinching abstinence (inaction) in the face of social distress which will then be called for are likely to prove a little bleak.

It would be wonderful to identify a single intellectual error which lies behind the penals and confusions of the modern world — and even better to discover how to dispense an effective remedy for it. But any valid intellectualist theory of the source of modern ills would have to be considerably more pluralist in structure and vastly more intricate in specification than Hayek's. In truth, neither in its diagnosis nor in its remedy is his present position at all convincing. It is not epistemological error which has rendered economic planning attractive — any more than it was Cartesian rationalism that led the Pharaohs to attempt to control the Egyptian grain supply. It is not primitive sentimentality that makes most inhabitants of this country still prefer for their fellow-citizens to enjoy at least a decent minimum of welfare. Nor is the view that every form of bureaucratic planning can only do economic damage readily reconcilable with the dynamism of Japan's post-war industrial innovation. Practical skill, and indeed tacit knowledge, can take a wide variety of forms; as can human folly.

What is convincing about Hayek's views is the urgency of his warning of the potential economic costs of a naive and self-righteous *dirigisme*. But as to how wealthy commercial societies today can hope to learn efficiently and adapt effectively, this remains an intellectual problem, fusing politics with economics, to which no one at present appears to possess a very cogent solution. It is a problem which may yet bury us all.

TOM SHARPE WILT ON HIGH

"Tom Sharpe serves up the loudest laughs in literary comedy... He is the great post-Waugh humorist, the Wodehouse who dares plunge into the bottomless vulgarity and hysteria of our times, and a rattling good companion on a train journey."
David Hughes, Mail on Sunday

"Tom Sharpe's plot in *Wilt on High* could never happen in real life. Yet such is his comic brilliance that one constantly reminds oneself how true to life his fiction is."
David Twiston Davies, Daily Telegraph

"*Wilt on High* has much to enjoy as well as something serious to say."
T.O. Treadwell, Times Literary Supplement

"Tom Sharpe is back on form... Returning to the Fenland Tech and his greatest comic hero means that this time he stays Sharpe to the bottom of the glass."
Nicholas Shrimpton, Sunday Times

£8.95

Secker & Warburg

The path of an empty boat

Simon Leys

DICK WILSON
Chau: The story of Zhou Enlai 1898-1976
349pp. Hutchinson. £14.95.
009 1543401

Alone among the Maoist leaders, Zhou Enlai had cosmopolitan sophistication, charm, wit and style. He certainly was one of the greatest and most successful actors of our century. He had a talent for telling blatant lies with angelic suavity. He was the kind of man who could stick a knife in your back and do it with such disarming grace that you would still feel compelled to thank him for the deed. He gave a human face (and a very good-looking one) to Chinese Communism. Everyone loved him. He repeatedly and literally got away with murder. No wonder politicians from all over the world unanimously worshipped him. That intellectuals should also share in this cult is more disturbing - although there are some extenuating circumstances.

Zhou was a compulsive seducer. I am not of course referring to his behaviour with the ladies, which was always said to be exemplary and anyway should not concern us. What I mean simply is that, for him, it seems that no interlocutors ever appeared too small, too dim or too irrelevant not to warrant a special effort on his part to charm them and to win their sympathy and support. I can state this from direct and personal experience, an experience that was shared over the years by hundreds and thousands of enraptured visitors - primary-school teachers from Zanzibar, trade-unionists from Tasmania, Progressive Women from Lapland; not even the Pope would have had to cope with such time-consuming, bizarre and endless processions of pilgrims. Zhou was also the ultimate Zelig of politics: showing tolerance, urbanity and a spirit of compromise to urbane Western liberals; spitting fire and hatred to suit the taste of embittered Third World leaders; displaying culture and refinement to the Chinese intelligentsia; with philosophers, and Kissingerian with Kissinger.

Besides these strange and absorbing social activities, he was also directing the entire administration of the most populous nation on earth. He personally solved a thousand problems a day, having to substitute in practically every matter for a timorous bureaucracy forever reluctant to take any decision or bear any responsibility. He dispatched the affairs of the state with the supreme efficiency of an old Taoist ruler who knows that one should govern a large empire in the way that one cooks a little fish. He seemingly never slept and still looked relaxed. He could display almanacously an exalting attention to minute detail, worthy of a fussy housewife, and a breadth of vision that awed the greatest statesmen of our time.

Although he permanently occupied the centre of the stage, his public activity was a mere sinecure compared with the other show - far

more intense, absorbing and momentous - that was running non-stop offstage in the dark recesses of inner-Party politics: there, he had to perform incredible acrobatics in order to remain on top of the greasy pole - eliminating rivals in a relentless power struggle, dodging ambushes, surviving murderous plots hatched by old comrades. etc. His task became more and more superhuman as he had to lend single-handedly, for the benefit of a bemused international audience, an impressive façade of humanity, intelligence and sanity to a régime whose increasing cruelty, ineptitude and madness were finally to come out into the open during the last ten years of the Maoist era.

Zhou's reputation may eventually suffer from the posthumous debunking of Mao (which is a paradox, since, in the end, Mao had ruthlessly attempted to get rid of him). Still, Chinese intellectuals are probably being unfair when they describe him as having merely played Albert Speer to Mao's Hitler. Zhou's relations with his master did not reflect a straightforward subordination but something far more complex. For many years before Mao reached supreme power, Zhou had actually been running the Chinese Communist Party behind the screen of a series of ineffectual or unlucky nominal leaders who were purged one after another. He weathered these successive crises, practically unscathed, and from these early days displayed an uncanny ability for political survival that was to become the hallmark of his long career. He developed methods that made him unkillable: always exert power by proxy; never occupy the front seat; whenever the opposition is stronger, immediately yield. His unique competences made him indispensable; and he cultivated at the same time a quality of utter elusiveness: no one could pin him down to a specific political line, nor associate him with any particular faction. He never expressed personal ideas nor put down his own theoretical views on paper. Where did he really stand? What did he actually believe? Apparently, he had no other policies but those of the leader of the moment, and nourished no other ambitions but to serve that leader with total dedication.

Yet, the brilliance of Zhou's mind, the sharpness of his intelligence, his personal magnetism, his eloquence and authority constantly belied the kind of bloodlessness which he so studiously displayed in the performance of his public duties. Zhou's enigma lay in this paradox: that, with all his exceptional talents, he should also present a sort of disconcerting and essential hollowiness. Some 2,300 years ago, Zhuang Zi, giving advice to a king, pointed out to him that, when a small boat drifts into the path of a huge barge, the crew of the barge will immediately about abuse at the stray craft; if however, coming closer, they discover that the little boat is empty, they will simply shut up and quietly steer clear of it. He concluded that a ruler who has to sail the turbulent waters of politics should first and foremost learn how to become an empty boat. History provides few examples of statesmen

who were so successful as Zhou Enlai in mastering this subtle discipline. It enabled him to become adept at survival. There was no limit to his willingness to compromise. Once, when the Communists had to co-operate again with the Nationalists, a local Party cadre rebelled against this shameful fraternization with fascist butchers, and indignantly asked Zhou: "Should we become mere concubines?" Zhou coolly replied: "If necessary, we should become prostitutes." Yet he was not seeking survival for survival's sake: he survived in order to win. He combined utter fluidity with absolute resilience, like water, which espouses instantaneously the shape of whatever container it happens to fill, and never surrenders one atom of its own nature - in the end, it always prevails. The contrast between the posthumous fates of Mao and Zhou is illuminating in this respect. Mao's mummy was left to rot in a huge and grotesque mausoleum at the heart of Peking, as if better to witness from this vantage point the dismantling of all his policies. As for Zhou, he once more vanished into thin air - quite literally this time, since he wisely requested that his ashes be scattered over the country - and beyond death, it is still he who is ruling over China, through his own hand-picked successors.

Zhou made history for half a century and wielded enormous power over one quarter of mankind; yet he apparently never succumbed to the temptation of self-aggrandizement and the lust for supremacy to which none of the other Chinese leaders remained immune. He withstood countless trials, crises, humiliations and dangers, he repeatedly served, with stoic loyalty, leaders who had neither his ability nor his experience - and yet he never wavered in his commitment to Chinese Communism. Where did he derive his spiritual strength from? What motivated him? Like many bourgeois intellectuals of his generation, in his youth he was fired by intense patriotism; in his early twenties, while in Europe, he seems to have identified the salvation of China once and for all with the victory of Communism. We know nothing more about his spiritual evolution. Zhou's enigma was thus compounded by a tragic paradox: this man who generously dedicated himself, body and soul, to the service of China, ended up as the staunchest pillar of a régime that managed to kill more innocent Chinese citizens in twenty-five years of peace than the combined forces of all the foreign imperialists in over one hundred years of endemic aggression.

There are three basic books on Zhou Enlai - two in English, one in Chinese. Kai-yu Hsu's *Chou En-lai: China's grey eminence* (1968) is the earliest and most readable, although the book is marred in the end by its muddled style. Hsu performed a remarkable work of detection in tracking down and interviewing Zhou's surviving relatives, old schoolmates and other acquaintances. This enabled him to write the most detailed account we have of Zhou's youth and early activities. Li Tien-min's *Chou En-lai* (Taipei, 1974) is dry and terse, concerned less

with the man than with his political activity, on which it provides clear and sound information. Yan Jingwen's *Zhou Enlai Pingzhuan* (Hong Kong, 1974) combines Hsu's human and psychological approach with Li's political acumen; his book is at times too fragmented, chaty and anecdotal, but it also offers illuminating insights - it is perhaps the most stimulating of the three.

A common shortcoming of these three works was that they were very sketchy on the post-1949 period and could not touch at all on Zhou's dramatic final years. There should be room, if not necessarily for a new biography, at least for a monograph that could update these earlier studies. I am not sure that Dick Wilson's book fills the gap. The author probably did not even nurture such an ambition: as his title modestly implies, this biography is merely concerned with story-telling, not with history-writing. The first half of the book is so good enough, as it essentially reduplicates its excellent predecessors; but it is not very useful either: what is the point of rewriting Kai-yu Hsu's work? The reader might as well refer directly to the original. (In at least one place, Wilson errs when paraphrasing an anecdote taken from Hsu's book. He unaccountably attributes to Zhou words actually pronounced by Shao Lizi (p.81). Hsu's anecdote - also found in Yan - becomes nonsensical when retold by Wilson, who misunderstands its actual import.)

Yet, in all fairness, it must be said that Wilson also makes some pertinent and useful references to sources which were not available to Zhou's earlier biographers. Whenever he leaves his three guides, however, he is treading on dangerous ground: at one point for instance, producing a double anecdote that seems rather fanciful, he refers to a Japanese source, itself quoting a Chinese source (Nishikawa citing He Changgong - twice). Had Wilson bothered to check directly with the Chinese source, he would have found that the two Japanese quotations were bogus.

The second half of the book (covering the post-1949 period) is disappointing: it amounts to little more than an enumeration of Zhou's public appearances. There is no real understanding of the complex dynamics of the various political struggles that took place during this eventful and dramatic era. One single example should suffice to illustrate how, as a result of Wilson's confused perception, history is being stood on its head: "Liu Shaoqi's pragmatism seemed dangerous to Zhou Enlai, because Liu appeared to be ready under the twin pressures of economic hardship and bureaucratic conservatism to let socialism go altogether." Many years ago, some twenty-year-old Red Guards earnestly believed, for one long hot summer, that Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were actually bent on liquidating socialism and on restoring capitalism. That, in 1984 (Deng Xiaoping *reignante*), there can still be respectable China specialists to entertain such notions, should be a cause for endless wonderment.

Eastern approaches

Iain Elliot

VIKTOR SUVOROV
Soviet Military Intelligence
193pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0241 112648
JOHN BARRON
KGB Today: The hidden hand
491pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0340 349425
LEO HEAPS
Thirty Years with the KGB: The double life of Hugh Hambleton
158pp. Methuen. £7.95.
0413 553000
ANATOLY GOLITSYN
New Lies for Old: The communist strategy of deception and disinformation now revealed by an ex-KGB officer
412pp. Bodley Head. £12.50.
0370 308050
RICHARD H. SCHULTZ and ROY GODSON
Dezinformatsia: Active measures in Soviet strategy
210pp. Pergamon Brassey's. Paperback, £8.60.
08 0315474
FRANTISEK AUGUST and DAVID REES
Red Star over Prague
176pp. Sherwood Press. £7.50.
0907671098
PENNY KIMBALL
The File
356pp. Allen and Unwin. £12.50.
0049200968

Oleg Bitov's imaginative explanation for his sojourn in the West received full coverage in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, the weekly newspaper for which he had worked. Yet his responses at the Moscow press conference raised more questions than they answered. Was he kidnapped by British secret agents, or did he choose freedom only to be dragged back home by Soviet agents? Did he "defect" to carry out some task for the KGB and did he then return voluntarily?

During his absence, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* advertised a competition to mark the seventh anniversary of the security police in December, 1987. Literary efforts and films glorifying their important work should be submitted to the Moscow Centre, Dzerzhinsky Street; winners will receive money, medals and valuable presents, but "books entered for the competition will not be returned".

The books reviewed here are written with serious intent, but fact and fiction in this funny business are so intricately interwoven that it is almost impossible to know where one ends and the other begins. The Bitov case emphasizes yet again the difficulty of distinguishing the genuine from the suspect in the testimony of defectors - but to disregard all the first-hand evidence of those who risk their life fleeing from the Soviet Union would be foolish.

The Committee of State Security (KGB) does not attempt to keep all its activities secret; in the Soviet Union knowledge of its all-pervasive presence makes the maintenance of party control much easier. Consult a Soviet dictionary about the rival GRU, however, and one might think it had something to do with geological exploration. But the acronym stands also for *Glavnoye razvedyvatelnoye upravlenie*, the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff.

Both organizations run spy rings in the West, and Moscow is offering no prizes to those who reveal the secrets of such operations. The GRU defector who uses the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov was condemned to death for "betrayal of the homeland", but he himself insists that the real traitors are the men in the Kremlin. *Soviet Military Intelligence* was originally written to advise the Western security services, which still provide Suvorov and his family with protection; it is more of a manual on how the GRU operates than an autobiographical account. Although it lacks the personal anecdotes which enlivened the author's earlier descriptions of his life in the Soviet army as a tank officer, it does contain fascinating information.

After participating in the "liberation" of Czechoslovakia in 1968 Suvorov had an offer from the GRU which he could not refuse. Most GRU officers are proud of their role in strengthening their country's defences by discovering the military secrets of potential enemies and

stealing their technology. They despise the KGB officers responsible for the dirty work of internal repression. Yet, as Suvorov points out, GRU recruiters are quite prepared to exploit human weakness mercilessly in the hunt for well-placed agents.

He provides a detailed and comprehensive account of the GRU administrative structure. More than five thousand senior officers control a vast network of undercover officers and agents operating in every country of the world. The sixteen military districts of the USSR, the Soviet forces in East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the Northern Pacific, Black Sea and Baltic fleets all have their own intelligence directorate subservient to the GRU. Each directorate runs an espionage network in its target countries and controls a sabotage organization known by the abbreviation *Spetsnaz*, which includes an entire brigade of 1,300 élite troops specially trained for operations behind the lines. Britain is a major objective of the Northern Fleet intelligence. According to Suvorov, just as the security police of Cuba and East European satellites are controlled by the KGB, their military intelligence comes under the GRU.

He disputes the conclusion of several Western writers, including John Barron, that the GRU is controlled by the KGB, arguing that the Communist Party Central Committee follows the well-tested precept of "divide and rule", preferring to have two separate sources of clandestine information. Since 1963 the head of the GRU has been General Petr Ivashutin, a former KGB officer who, despite repeated confrontations with Yuri Andropov, held on to his post when the latter moved from the KGB to the supreme post; Ivashutin still enjoys the support of the military and industrial chiefs.

Suvorov speaks and writes with conviction and his account of the GRU seems basically sound. However, not every detail is based on his own experience and he naturally does not reveal his sources for some of his information.

In his second major work on the KGB, John Barron again concentrates on espionage operations abroad rather than the equally important KGB function of preserving party authority at home. Unlike Suvorov, he cites his sources, but, with the commendable intention of making his book entertaining as well as instructive, he does not always warn his reader that an incident which makes a good story may not actually be true. *KGB Today* opens in Moscow with Yuri Andropov meeting the Canadian professor, Hugh Hambleton, for a cosy chat over a glass of wine to discuss espionage operations. "Who was that guy?" Hambleton asks. His controllers tell him, and he tells Barron, who then tells us that Andropov "took time from his weighty duties to personally attend to someone really important, a visiting spy". Yet Hambleton, now in a British prison, is a self-confessed liar, a man with an inflated sense of his own importance who appears to have betrayed Nato secrets with as little compunction as he deceived his women.

He evidently gave a different account to his friend Leo Heaps, who tells his story in *Thirty Years with the KGB*. There are glaring discrepancies, not least in the description of "Andropov". Barron says, correctly, that he is tall, but Heaps says he is "short". From sources like these come such historical facts as Andropov's fluent English and high level of culture. Barron gives us the taunting farewell dialogue between Hambleton and his Yugoslav girlfriend, wasting away from terminal cancer. The Heaps account, published later, has her laughing all the way to the bank, outstripping a breathless British journalist. Although Heaps gives a fuller version of the Hambleton case, Barron is much more comprehensive in describing recent KGB operations and adds much of importance to his *KGB: The secret work of Soviet secret agents* (1974), appending, for example, some 300 names to his earlier impressive list of exposed Soviet agents.

Barron tells of Stanislaw Levchenko, who worked openly as a Soviet correspondent in Tokyo while secretly subverting Japanese politicians and spreading disinformation. At an even deeper clandestine level, the contrast between the closed society of the Soviet Union - repressive, corrupt and inefficient - and the

freer, more prosperous life of Japan, added to Levchenko's disillusionment and led him to defect. The KGB needs clever, sensitive agents like Levchenko, but they are precisely the most likely to react against the evils of the system and defect, while corrupt officers like his boss, Vladimir Pronnikov, who falsely denounce their own colleagues, are promoted.

Barron describes too the economic and social difficulties facing the USSR and the phenomenal efforts expended to obtain advanced technology from the West. These chapters will be criticized by specialists as too negative and as occasionally inaccurate in detail, but his general conclusions are difficult to fault because of the sheer weight of evidence produced. Soviet espionage recovers its costs many times over through savings on research and development. By purchasing or stealing Western technology the Soviet Union is able to pose an even greater military challenge. Defectors such as Suvorov confirm this reasoning.

Another defector, Anatoly Golitsyn, seems determined to have the very real threat of KGB disinformation dismissed as fantasy by greatly distorting its extent. He argues that Soviet splits with Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania and even China were deliberately staged by the Kremlin to mislead the West; that the Prague Spring, the dissident movement in the USSR, and Eurocommunism were likewise products of KGB disinformation. Golitsyn alleges, but of course cannot prove, that almost every development reported about the communist world, from Sakharov to Solidarity, is suspect. He succeeds only in casting doubt on the information he himself supplied when he defected in 1961; yet this proved of the highest value at the time. As with all defectors, it is vital to distinguish between what he knows from first-hand experience, what is the result of careful analysis of available sources and what, like most of Golitsyn's book, is sheer guesswork. Richard H. Schultz and Roy Godson in *Dezinformatsia* provide a much more convincing study of the role of disinformation in Soviet strategy. They carefully document Moscow's attempts to manipulate world opinion through agents of influence, international front organizations and by planting forgeries on the often too susceptible media.

Frantisek August served in the Czechoslovak security and espionage organization (STB) from 1949 to 1969. He defected in Beirut where he had been posted as a major in the STB under the cover of Third Secretary at the Czechoslovak Embassy. His career provided first-hand material for this valuable inside account by Frantisek August and David Rees of how Moscow's control of a satellite country is perpetuated by Soviet agents infiltrating into the party and security police leadership. The description of the relationship between the KGB and the STB is particularly interesting, especially in explaining the thorough Soviet preparations to crush the Prague Spring. From 1961 to 1963 August was posted to the London Embassy from which he helped run Czechoslovak espionage rings in Britain. He was spotted by MI5 which, in a gentlemanly way, over whiskies in a suburban pub, attempted to recruit him.

Penny Kimball's distressing experience might at first glance serve to confirm those who believe that Western security services are little better than the KGB. Thanks to the Freedom of Information Act this distinguished American journalist and academic, who has served on the staff of prominent politicians, discovered in 1978 that since 1946 the US State Department had him listed as a possible security risk because of his stand on trade-union rights. Both the FBI and CIA kept files based largely on unsubstantiated allegations by people who either did not know him well, or did not like him; positive comments were ignored in the final draft entered in his dossier.

Kimball was thus excluded from government work - particularly serious when he was briefly unemployed with a wife and daughter to support; he believes that he was even refused a Fulbright scholarship because of the file. The issues he raises are important and stirred up much healthy debate in the United States. The other books reviewed here demonstrate clearly the need for security, yetting, Kimball shows that it should be done more efficiently.

October titles from Allen & Unwin SOCIAL WORK When Social Services are Local The Normanton Experience

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Daily Mail

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Scrutinizing the inscrutable

Delia Davin

VERA SCHWARZ
Long Road Home: A China Journal
284pp. Yale University Press. £19.95.
0300 030096

JAMES BALLINGALL
A Taste of China
190pp. John Murray. £9.95.
0719541034

JONATHAN PORTER and ELIOT PORTER
All Under Heaven: The Chinese World
192pp. Gollancz. £29.95.
0575 05242

China is not an easy country in which to be a foreigner. The Chinese awareness of "us and them" is intense, pervasive and hard to break down. It is expressed in the many annoying rules and restrictions with which the foreigners' lives are hedged around and, equally, in the exemptions they are granted from the ordinary hardships of Chinese life. Whereas

foreign residents in, say, France, tend to class themselves as British, Spanish, Algerian or whatever, in China they quickly start to refer to themselves simply as "foreigners".

Foreigners in China vary immensely in their ability to live with this barrier. Vera Schwarz, perhaps because as an immigrant with her family to the United States from Romania she had already learnt once to cope in a new world, succeeded very well. *Long Road Home* charts what she feels was a journey of self-discovery as well as an experience which taught her much about China, a stay of sixteen months at Peking University as a research scholar. Her subject was a delicate one, the relationship between politics and the intellectual as reflected in the May Fourth Movement, the great cultural and political renaissance which convulsed Chinese society in the years after the patriotic rejection of the Versailles settlement in 1919. Gradually, after much patient effort, Schwarz was granted interviews with some of the intellectual giants of that era - remarkably long-lived people despite the vicissitudes which characterised their lives. The author's warmth and her

capacity for friendship are evident in her accounts both of these interviews and of encounters with more ordinary Chinese in her life as a student. Some of her most moving meetings were with victims of the Cultural Revolution. She writes of these survivors that they are not burdened by any sense of unprecedented suffering, rather they see their experiences as part of a long history of turmoil and contradiction. Her discussion goes far to explain why so many of them have preserved at least a measure of idealism of faith. Despite her expertise, Schwarz is an essentially modest observer. Faced with the complexities of Chinese society, she is always ready to alter her preconceptions. On one important occasion early in her stay, embarrassed by her limited Chinese, she took refuge in polite commonplaces rather than risking making a fool of herself by attempting a real conversation. In her journal she is ashamed of this nervousness but frank about it. Her book constantly informs, but her tone is never didactic.

By contrast James Ballingall is a lightweight. *A Taste of China* is a humorous account of his

travels over a period of a few weeks in China. As he did not speak Chinese many of his "adventures" arose simply from his difficulties in making himself understood. However he visited some interesting places and had been stuck to describing what he saw he might have produced a better book. Unfortunately his descriptions are interspersed with stale and often ill-informed accounts of China's history, economy and society. Although he shares with many English travellers a tendency to see people of other cultures as essentially comic, Ballingall is quite well-disposed towards the Chinese. It is, it appears, only through ignorance that he makes such frequent use of the word "Chinaman", a term which the OED rightly warns is derogatory.

All Under Heaven is a remarkably beautiful book of photographs of the historical, cultural and natural worlds of China from the Gobi Desert to the lush subtropical south. The commentary provides a competent explanation of the images which draw the reader's attention. The high price of the book is matched by the high quality of the reproductions.

A city built on sand

S. S. Praver

LUCJAN DOBROSYCKI (Editor)
The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, 1941-1944
Translated by Richard Louie, Josephim
Neugroschel and others
619pp. Yale University Press. £25.
0300032080

As dawn you will ask: what about resistance? Do the heroes assemble in the shoe-factory, perhaps, or on the goods station - some of them at least? Have they discovered, at the southern perimeter which is least overseen and therefore least easy to guard, some dark canals through which arms might be smuggled into the ghetto? Or are there, in this wretched town, only hands that do exactly what Hardloff and his guards demand of them? - Condemn them, go on, condemn us all; it is true, there were only hands of that kind. Not a single shot was fired in justice; order and tranquillity were strictly preserved; not a hint of resistance. I am bound to say it: I believe there was no resistance. I am not omniscient, but my statement is based, as they say, on probability bordering on certainty. Had there been anything, I would most surely have noticed it.

The ghetto which the narrator of Jurek Becker's *Jacob the Liar* here recalls is not named; but there are many indications that it is based on the ghetto the German invaders set up in the Polish city of Lodz during the Second World War. There the situation differed radically from that in the Warsaw ghetto, his experience of which Roman Polanski's autobiography has recently described in detail. Soon after Poland had been overrun, the city of Lodz - the "Manchester of Poland", centre of a great textile and clothing industry, home to some 250,000 Jews - became part of the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, an administrative unit incorporated into Hitler's Reich. It was renamed Litzmannstadt, and subjected to intense Germanization and Nazification. "The Polish population", Lucjan Dobroszycki reminds us,



Rumkowski, "the Elder", officiating at a wedding ceremony; reproduced from the book reviewed here.

whose number fluctuated from around 396,000 in 1940 to around 343,000 in 1944, was thrust into the role of parish. The city had been almost entirely pacified. This the occupiers achieved by means of terror, constant surveillance, and the expulsion of the Polish population from certain districts of the city including those in close proximity to the ghetto. And thus there arose a sort of no-mans-land between the Jewish quarter and the "Aryan" part of the city. Ultimately, a ghetto Jew could cross the fence but there would be no one waiting on the other side to serve him as a guide, supply him with the necessary papers, and provide him with initial accommodations. Irrespective of motive or principle, for money or not. It is a fact that, apart from one very special and singular case, there is no record thus far of any Jewish family or individual surviving the war in Lodz by being on "Aryan" territory, as occurred in Warsaw, Cracow, Lodz, Lublin, and many other Polish cities. The Jews in the Lodz ghetto were indeed cut off as nowhere else.

One of the consequences of this state of affairs was that the Germans were able to prevent news from outside reaching the ghetto more effectively, and for a longer time, than elsewhere; and the truth about their extermination policy; even where it was picked up by an occasional rumor - and the ghetto, as readers of *Jacob the Liar* will know, was full of rumors - or even by a clandestinely overheard radio broadcast, remained hidden from its designated victims for longer than one would have thought possible. How could they believe that inhumanities on that scale would be tolerated even in Hitler's Europe? How could they fail to believe that by bowing their heads, fulfilling their work-quotas for Speer's slave-labour economy, trying to mitigate the effects of harsher and harsher decrees by pleading, negotiation, dodges of every kind, they would weather out this storm as Jewish communities had weathered out so many others? That, certainly, was the view of the "Elder of the Jews" designated by the Germans, and by the committees within the ghetto who reinforced and carried out his policy of fulfilling German demands with the minimum of hurt and damage. Again and again we find the "Elder" able to wring out some small concession in return for submission in what the Germans regarded as essential; until in the end it is he and his Jewish committees and police force who not only register but also select men, women and children for "resettlement" - one of many euphemisms whose full force we can appreciate today more easily than these desperate men clutching at every straw of hope. By no means before the exter-

mination camps of Kulmhof (Chelmno) and Auschwitz had been primed for the infamies of the "Final Solution", the fate of the ghetto into which Jews from Lodz, from other Polish towns and villages, and from the German heartland, were driven, had been effectively sealed. There was to be no place for Jews in Litzmannstadt; one way or another the city was to be Germanized entirely, the ghetto-buildings were to be razed, and a suburb for German inhabitants was to be built on the site, dominated by a magnificent centre for the National German Workers Party. But this the Elder of the Jews did not know when he and his committees decided on their policy, rammed home in speech after speech, of persuading the Germans, by the excellence of the goods delivered to them from factories and workshops within the ghetto, that Jews were useful citizens whose lives deserved to be made tolerable, even in Litzmannstadt. Those of us who were spared the kinds of decision such men had to make are in no position to pass judgment on them.

which personalize the chronicle, make the statistics live in a way impossible by other means. The Chronicle begins on January 12, 1941, and breaks off on July 30, 1944. When the Russians arrived in Lodz later that year they found only 877 Jews of the tens of thousands who had passed through the ghetto. But the archive, hidden from the Germans, was found - and it included a copy of the Chronicle, whose English version Lucjan Dobroszycki has edited, introduced and annotated. Since Dobroszycki is also the co-author of *Image before my Eyes: A photographic history of Jewish life in Poland 1864-1939*, it will surprise no one to find that the texts he has included are supplemented by an excellent selection of the moving photographs of ghetto life and destitution taken, often at considerable risk, by M. Grossman and others for the ghetto archives and hence for posterity.

It was impossible to include the whole Chronicle even in so substantial a volume as this. What we are given is about a fourth of the whole text, helpfully introduced and anno-

tated, and so well selected that the work by whose means the toasts of archivists, decimated by death and supplemented by new arrivals, maintained their human identity and dignity, can be recognized for the uniquely valuable record that it is. Those who compiled it never lost their faith that what they chronicled would be read by posterity; that its indictment would be understood; and that the increasingly intolerable conditions they described would stir the conscience of future readers and thus help, in some small measure, to bring about a time in which human beings would no longer inflict such sufferings on their fellow-men.

In his Introduction, the editor points out a number of constraints under which the chroniclers laboured. Two of these are of especial importance. There was always a danger that the Germans might discover the typescripts; it was therefore advisable not to condemn and lament their misdeeds too openly. The acollution the chroniclers found was to speak of the Germans as little as possible; to record their orders and the implementations of those orders, but to concentrate throughout on the victims rather than the perpetrators. This limitation of perspective proved, in the end, a strength rather than a weakness - for it enabled the chroniclers to concentrate on the minutiae of ghetto life and death with a single-mindedness, a closeness of focus, which make their work unique among all the records we have of the great *khurbim*, the unparalleled catastrophes, that came upon the Jewish people during the last war. The other constraint, clearly, was that the Chronicle could not be hidden from the Elder of the Jews and his committees, who had set up the archives in the first instance. The way in which the Elder's decisions and actions are reported therefore reflects the most favourable view that could be taken of them.

A book of Chronicles is not a book of Lamentations. The enormity of what went on in the ghetto - the constant hunger that made potato peelings one of the most prized possessions, the pulmonary diseases and outbreaks of typhus, the plagues of vermin, the killing (literally) overwork, the death of hospital facilities and medicine (how the many diabolical punishments which ranged from the confiscation of all musical instruments to the destruc-

tion of all synagogues, the shootings and public hangings, the mental breakdowns and suicides, the mass registrations and deportations - all this is brought home to us with powerful effect by the unexaggerated, muted way in which the chroniclers set down their terrible facts. Inevitably they record moments of hope, moments of play, moments even of joy; but these are only moments, and they leave the surrounding gloom darker still. No less inevitably the record also includes, right up to the end, instances of gallows humour and of bitter Jewish wit.

No aspect of ghetto life, or of ghetto death, goes unrecorded here, from hard - all too hard - news to the most fantastic rumours, from the hunger for books and writing materials to work on the latrines, from recitals by virtuosos once famous in an outside world that had put up with their disappearance behind the ghetto walls to the activities of petty criminals with colourful Yiddish names. The sufferings of the German Jews, accustomed to venerate German cultural achievements, accustomed to obey the laws promulgated by duly constituted authority, often wholly estranged from Judaism, become clear in detail after detail faithfully reported in the Lodz Chronicle after some 20,000 newcomers arrived in the autumn of 1941.

They arrived here in long files, festively-styled people whose appearance contrasted so sharply with the naive squalor. We were struck by their elegant sports clothes, their exquisite footwear, their hats, the many variously colored capes the women wore. They often gave the impression of being people on some sort of vacation or, rather, engaged in winter sports, for the majority of them wore ski clothes. You couldn't tell there was a war on from the way those people looked; and the fact that, during the bitter cold spells, they strolled about in front of the gates to their "transports," and about the "city" as well, demonstrated most eloquently that their layer of fat afforded them excellent protection from the cold.

Barely six months later we meet the same figures again:

Some of the metamorphoses could not be imagined, even in a dream. . . . Ghosts, skeletons with swollen faces and extremities, ragged and impoverished, they now left for a further journey to which they were not even allowed to take a knapsack. . . . They had been stripped of all their European finery, and only the Eternal Jew was left. . . .

Some 2,000 of these arrivals came from one of the oldest of all Jewish settlements in German lands, from Cologne and the Rhineland. It is only an accident of history, a concatenation of a number of fortunate circumstances which no one had any right to expect, that the writer of this review, who fled to England from Cologne just before the doors slammed shut in 1939, was not among that sad troop whose journey ended at Chelmno or at Auschwitz.

The history of the Jews of Lodz before the Second World War will be vividly present in the minds of many readers, even if they have never visited that city or encountered members of that doomed community, because of its personalization in one of the masterpieces of Yiddish literature: Israel Joshua Singer's *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, translated by Maurice Samuel and again, more recently, by Joseph Singer. No one who has ever read that novel will forget its closing lines, written in 1935, when all of Jewish Lodz - a city built on sandy soil and reached by sandy roads - comes to the funeral of the central protagonist, Max Ashkenazi:

The grave-diggers had prepared a small grave, as if for a child. A stranger recited over the coffin the Kaddish which Max Ashkenazi's son should have recited. Strangers threw the first handful of earth into the open grave.

"Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt, and all that is in thee is earth," they murmured.

A thick mist had descended from the skies over Lodz. A wind rose and blew the dust of the cemetery into the eyes of the mourners. Heavily and slowly, like the rolling mists above them, they turned back to the desolate and alien city.

"Sand", they muttered, covering their eyes with their hands. "Everything we have built was built on sand."

The evening came on with swift strides. In the black sky above the mourners a flock of birds flying in half-moon formation passed with stiller cries. The name "Ashkenazi" is symbol - "Ashkenazi" is the Jewish name for the region that includes Germany and Poland; and *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto*, in its sober yet unforgettable vivid fashion, tells all the world what a foreboding lay in the city with which Singer ended his book just two years after Hitler had seized power in Germany.

A common interest

Richard Overy

JOHN TURNER (Editor)
Business and Politics: Studies of business
activity in British politics, 1900-1945
200pp. Heinemann. £18.50.
0435328700

There is an instructive anecdote in Oswald Mosley's memoirs of a meeting with Lord Nuffield shortly after the launching of the New Party. The "business genius", Mosley thought, was "lost outside his own sphere. . . . Political conversation with him tended to be tedious. However, once he flew out of the window when at the end of lunch he pulled a cheque from his pocket for £50,000." Money was one language they both understood. A great social and intellectual gulf divided Britain's educated political class from the captains of British industry, and John Turner has marshalled here a series of workmanlike studies which explore efforts to cross this divide in the fifty years before 1945.

This is an altogether welcome endeavour. Banking and finance now have an honourable place in discussions of politics and diplomacy throughout the period in question. Industry has been left all too often to economic historians, who are understandably more interested in measuring economic performance than poli-

tical impact. The political history of much of recent European capitalism still remains to be written. Turner offers his book as "the beginning, not the end of the road".

It is not an easy road. Discussions about business and politics immediately open up important issues of theory and method. Turner is aware of this, and arrives at a very British conclusion: nothing general can be said until all the nuts and bolts have been examined. This means rejecting from the outset the "Marxist" interpretation, with its emphasis on political forms as a function of particular economic systems. It also means rejecting what Turner calls the "corporatist" approach, a view he ascribes to a school of German political scientists and historians who have argued that industry, labour and government through mutual agreement have operated the political system in their favour, at the expense of the voters.

Empiricism is, of course, all very well. Yet it leads in this case to a rather mechanical view of what is meant by "business" and by "politics". Neither is carefully defined, or really defined at all. Business is broadly understood to mean large and medium-scale industry. It is difficult to see where this leaves small businesses, and it neglects the importance of commerce and finance and of the inter-relationships between different business forms. Nor does it tell us

ferior abilities". Indeed, the need for renewal in one sector of British industry after another comes through strongly. One of the darkest portraits is that of the dreadful Douglas-Pennant, Lord Penrhyn, who waged an unrelenting war against his labour force and the North Wales Quarrymen's Union. The defeat of the men, and their wives and children, at the hands of this appalling man left an emotional scar for generations, dividing the village families who capitulated from those who fought on to the bitter end. And how are we to judge the career of Joseph Duveen, who directed art treasures to where the money was, sending in a period of thirty years some £100 million worth of European art to North America?

Two essays perhaps stand out in terms of general interest: Barbara Smith on Sir Bernard Docker and his wife, and William Rubinstein on Sir John Ellerman. The Docker saga was real *Dynasty* material, with Bernard trying to build on to his inherited industrial empire while under the highly distracting influence of Norah, whose mother had kept The Three Tuns in Sutton Coldfield and who had been twice widowed by millioaires before she took on Bernard. He, reputed to be a shy man, found himself in the centre of a much publicized parody of the high life, made the more crass by Norah's carelessness of tongue and reputation, aggravated by too much alcohol. Her determination to gain control of Daimler produced a classic boardroom row.

Ellerman was an antithetical case: he was his own, lonely man from beginning to end, who from nothing became far and away the richest man in England, exemplifying, as Rubinstein puts it, "the purest approach to disembodied business intellect ever seen in Britain". "If any comparison suggests itself", we read, "it is to a grand master chess champion" who, while appearing solitary and eccentric to others, creates masterpieces by means of continuing ratiocination against a lifelong series of opponents. "His success lay in taking over firms and restoring them to efficient and dynamic performance, and his career implies, as Rubinstein suggests, that the British economy was crying out for more Ellermans."

There are also one or two tumbles into bathos, as when we read of someone who "went to Cape Colony to incorporate his glands and entered his uncle's store which specialised in catfish feathers"; or of another, who was "100 yards champion of East Bengal", or of the heroic figure who in his youth "had his horse shot out from under him twice".

Information on conservatism, "alternative", special interest and statutory environmental bodies is listed in *Directory for the Environment: Organisations in Britain and Ireland* by Michael J. C. Barker (281pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £8.95. 07102 0227 X). A subject index is included.

much about the rapid changes in the character of "business" over this period, though the transition from family firms to shareholders and professional managers must have affected its politics (it clearly has done so since 1945). "Politics" is also rather narrowly interpreted. Most of the essays implicitly assume that what is meant by that is the political process centred on Westminster. There is surely nothing particularly Marxist in suggesting that the political system is much larger than this, and that politics, in both a formal and an informal sense, is conducted within and between industries, or between "capital" and "labour".

Some of these questions are faced squarely in the book. In one of the best pieces George Feden argues that the distinction is a false one, that politicians, the ruling class and businessmen, although their immediate interests might be divergent, have a common set of assumptions about the political system and share the same broad social ambitions. This was evident in wartime. Businesses were then allowed to make money; politicians could control what they made, how much it cost, and what resources were used. Both sides were committed to the defence of the existing system. A belief in economic individualism and antipathy to labour were also widely shared, and indeed crop up here in almost every chapter. There is more structure and system here than the book is prepared to admit. If capitalism and class are difficult concepts to handle historically, they are also difficult to ignore.

Nevertheless the main contours of the "empirical" picture emerge clearly enough through the eight studies presented here. Businessmen found it difficult to act collectively, were shy of formal politics, except for a brief parliamentary spell after 1918, and had great difficulty in effectively penetrating the political system. Efforts to establish umbrella organizations (the Federation of British Industries or the National Confederation of Employers' Organizations) not only met resistance from industrialists, but failed to be taken

seriously enough by government. There was no corporatist compact between capital and government in the inter-war years. Industry was treated as a lobby group like any other. When government and the civil service intervened they did so on an *ad hoc* basis, often with a weather eye on the electorate, and in many cases with a profound ignorance of the industry or the economic pressures with which they were dealing. Industry itself had a poor image with the politicians, who were drawn in many cases from a quite different social and educational background. Britain's political class treated businessmen patronizingly and high-handedly.

There was, however, considerable identity of interest. Sir Warren Fisher is quoted as saying that "the supreme interest of the stockholders is the integrity of the state". What the British political system was designed to do was to provide a secure environment within which the economy could grow. Industry could also extract major concessions: decontrol after 1918; tariffs and safeguarding (although industry itself was deeply divided on protection); a minimum of direct state interference. In return, industry more than pulled its weight in two world wars.

Maintaining political stability, a secure state and sound trade and finance, met most of the requirements that British capitalism made of the state. Without them British politics might have been very different. Indeed there is powerful evidence, particularly in Turner's own article on industrial lobby-groups, that Britain, like Germany, faced the prospect of the "fragmentation of bourgeois politics". A plethora of small middle-class interest groups (the National Stability League, the Liberty and Property Defence League, etc) sprang up in the thirty years after 1900, preaching a mixture of small-business populism and moral rearmament. Without Britain's uniquely powerful ruling class with its resilient political system, and with Nuffield's £50,000 in his pocket, what might Mosley have made of it all?



"This book offers a subtle, highly sophisticated, fresh and unfurling interesting interpretation of some central themes in Marx's thought. Agreeably undogmatic, it has much to interest non-Marxist moral philosophers, political theorists and economists." - Steven Lukes, Oxford University

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The importance of being English

Cairns Craig

C. H. Sisson
Collected Poems 1943-1983
383pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £14.95.
085635 4988

JOACHIM DUBELLAY
The Regrets
Translated by C. H. Sisson
147pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £4.50.
085636 4716

C. H. Sisson is not a comfortable writer. His poetry is brusque, edgy, assertive and aggressive; it is self-lacerating, continually unbuttoning the pretensions of humanity to display the vile body underneath:

An old hermit, sitting at the door - it is myself -
And inside,
Her limbs stretched on a bed, rationally
- Smooth as lard.

And yet Sisson, who began writing poetry in earnest in his mid-thirties and who was almost unknown until his fifties, has provoked - as few others have done - deep commitment among many younger English poets in the past ten years. With Michael Schmidt's Carcanet Press and with *PN Review*, he has found a fortunate position in contemporary English poetry. It is based, however, not so much on his disgruntled denial of the powers of humanity ("It is idiotic to pretend to / Any particular knowledge of anything"), as on the bedrock of his belief in England ("Those who kick their ancestors in the teeth / Prosper for a time, but in adversity / Which soon comes, there is a change"); a belief as firm as a rock -

Gather your force until
We are all of one mind;
Then let the pagans go.

Deride the Scots and send
The Welsh back to their holes.
Drive out the Irish priests.

and as comforting as a bed where, in Her-
man's words, "you make your pillow either
of your own blood or of the blood of others."

Carcanet marked Sisson's seventeenth birth-
day earlier this year with a collected edition of
his poetry. The previous collection of his
poems and translations, *In the Trojan Ditch*,
put his earliest poems last and his most recent
first, but now, whether because his reputation
is so much more formidable a decade later, or
in acknowledgment of the chronology it cele-

brates, temporal order is re-established and we
follow the stages of his development rather
than looking at his past through the glasses of
the present. Since all the poems are, as he
himself has said, "poems of the return jour-
ney", his development is not, as with most
poets, affected much by shifts in personality or
in attitude: Sisson stops into his poetry already
fully himself, a sceptic haunted by the possibi-
lity of faith, disgusted by his own frailty, ob-
sessed with time and death, finding his primary
inspiration in the decay of age to match the
age's decay:

The shape of life
Is ejaculation
What aspiration
The old men have, sitting toothless at their meetings
Is recollection

The function done
The body waits to suffer
Into a waxen log

It is an uncompromising vision, and its
equally uncompromising social, political and
religious corollaries have deeply affected the
response of many to the poetry itself. There
are those who see in Sisson's commitment to
the poetic craft, and in his unrelenting cam-
paign against humanity's self-delusions, a re-
covery of values which had been almost swept
aside in an uncritical acceptance of contem-
porary both poetic and moral. For them, Sisson's
is a classical art: it is defined by a sense of
history both literary and national, by an atten-
tiveness to the structure of the line that reveals
an exceptional ear for the language, and by a
plain style that, in Donald Davie's view, "de-
pends upon assumptions of continuity between
the English of the poem, the English of prose,
and the English of considered and heartfelt
speech". In this context, John Pilling has prob-
ably made the strongest claim for Sisson's
work, arguing that he has realized the "con-
sonantia, caritas, and integritas that ultimate-
ly eluded those writers" - like Joyce, Eliot and
Pound - "who, at the turn of the century, were
intent on cultivating 'the classical temper'".

On the other side, however, there are those
who see in Sisson only the symptom of a period
of reaction, his values nostalgic, his stance an
elitist denial of common humanity. Such views
have found Sisson's work marked primarily by
banality and pastiche: he "repeatedly makes
the point (if it is a point) that existence is
meaningless, but . . . does not manage to ren-
der the point in poetry which might bring out
its awfulness and absurdity", Alan Holling-

hurst commented, finding the poetry "rhythmi-
cally inert and linguistically monotonous".
Sisson's relation to writers earlier in the cen-
tury has also been unflatteringly construed;
John Lucas thought that "if he isn't sounding
like a bad parody of Eliot" then "he is sounding
like a worse parody of Allen Tate".

The debate obviously has as much to do with
politics as with metrics, but looking across the
Collected Poems there is no doubt that they
present a problem of language and style. Like
many who come late to poetry, his earlier work
is laboured, full of echoes of the rhythmic and
stylistic tricks of other poets. Even by the early
1970s, he can commit himself to a hundred
mechanical stanzas, rigidly patterned in the
manner of Herbert, in which the form seems
willfully imposed on the matter. Admirers can
find his use of metre supple and innovative, but
often the most appropriate comparison seems to
be with the laboured improvisations of Hardy.
And even recent poems contain lines of a
stunning banality -

How, under them, can you be content
With the light, the fire and the Christmas tree?
Or the gesticulating screen
There by the bottles in the corner?
What spirit moves? What memory
Sits in the human race today?

- in which uninspired perceptions (what else
would it be but a "gesticulating screen") are
buttressed by an unsuccessful leap towards
profundity. Since, however, Sisson's subject is
so often the banality of life, one is tempted to
think that this is a play with the hoary old
cheat, imitative form, and that the language
here is meant to mimic a banality the poem
wants to challenge, just as the imitation of
seventeenth-century forms seems to imply the
values of a world prior to the English Civil War
- after which the human mind began to decay.

Against such lapses can be held up Sisson's
commitment to the "plain style". It is a style he
uses to good effect, for instance, in his transla-
tions of Du Bellay; if, occasionally, the lines
slide into slackness, they also manage to sus-
tain the sense of a speaker who - no doubt like
Sisson himself when he was a civil servant - is
used to dealing with the business of the world
in a language which has no time for adornment:

To walk solemnly and with brows knelt,
And welcome everyone with a solemn smile,
Weigh all one's words, answer and think as well
Whether "Yes, sir" or "No, sir" is what is wanted.

That plain style, however, is not quite the same
as the style that Sisson developed through the
1970s, when he seems to have come decisively
to recognize the technical achievements of
Pound. The language may be "plain", but the
presentation is oblique, and it is here that Sisson's
claim that "rhythm is the ligament" of
poetry is most fully tested. The difficulty,
however, is that many of the poems cast up a
multiplicity of echoes of Eliot and Pound in
both style and phrasing, echoes which may be
allusions (Eliot's "Gerontion" haunts this
period) or may be seepages which reveal Sisson's
own poetic uncertainty.

The volume, *Excursions*, for instance, is lit-
tered with Eliotisms: its opening poem, "The
Desert", places us firmly in *The Waste Land* -

This is the only place that I inhabit:
The desert.

No drop of water; no palm trees; nothing.
No gourd, no cactus: sand
Heaped on all sides like mountainous seas
To drown in.

And its penultimate poem, "Burrington
Combo", hollowly performs an Eliotic incanta-
tion:

If night falls, there is nothing more
If night falls, there is nothing more
If night falls, there is nothing more
And it does fall, it is falling now

It may be that Sisson is fulfilling Modernism's
own injunction to "make it new" and injecting
the present with the past, but the effect can
be less that of a polysemious Modernism, or
even of a self-conscious classicism, than of an
influence insufficiently transcended.

Looking at Sisson's overall development,
however, what becomes clear is that, like
others who have started late in the writing of
poetry with an already established set of criti-
cal principles (the comparison that comes to
mind is Edwin Muir), Sisson's poetry does not
derive directly from the play and possibilities

of words, but from the attempt to shape a
language, often under others' influence and in
a stylistic restlessness, to convey the vision
which demands poetry of him as its only possi-
ble expression.

At the centre of that vision is his implacable
conviction of the unreality of the individual
human being - "ports, shores, / All that I am,
ghost of a part of a part". Against the confident
assertiveness of Sisson the critic, the poet
grotesque forward, unable to accept that there is
any such thing as his individual voice and in
search of an absolute which will redeem it.

As a result, some of his best poems before
Excursions (1976) are those, like "A Letter to
John Donne", or "Catullus", or "Horace", in
which the envisaging of another poet's world
gives a stable ground for a critique of the present
and, at the same time, the consciousness of a
style to which Sisson's own will be attuned and
against which it will be tested. It is precisely
when the tension between an adopted style and
the impossibility of fulfilling the demands of
truth in any human language is at its most
extreme, that Sisson's poetry turns its weak-
nesses into strengths. Where lines like these,
from "In the Trojan Ditch" -

Excoriate
Exaggerated, near dead
Racked, ripped
Uncovered, dismembered
The ribs
Cracked in a nut-cracker, the head
Opened with a tin-opener

- might have seemed like a forced appropri-
ation of someone else's devices (almost, indeed,
a theatrical version of a modern poetry that has
Donne and Hopkins at its back), they take
their place in a poem in which styles are being
mobilized as part of the drama of conscious-
ness, forming an ironic counterpoint to the
failure of individual meanings. The most sig-
nificant achievement of this stage in Sisson's de-
velopment is "The Usk" - its various sections,
with their different poetic tones ("I have no
language but that other one / His the devil's"),
enforcing the inability of human language to
fulfil the hope that "Christ is the language
which we speak to God".

It is as a balance to this vision of the emp-
iness of the individual that Sisson's sense of
tradition is employed - "If we live here, it is
indeed here that we live. / We cannot afford to
scoff at the *poys natal*, / Unless our minds are to
be born without content". A beautiful recent
poem, "The Mistletoe", gives us an image for
that balance, when it describes "the mistletoe
growing mysteriously / In the middle of the old
apple tree" that is like a "joining / From the
nothing I am into that something" where one
can "turn and twist with growth, and become
solid". Sisson's most powerful efforts to en-
capsulate that solidity come, however, not
when his mind is turned towards the traditions
of the past, nor when he tries to look back
through time (as his earlier *Collected Poems*
demanded), but as it were back from the fullness
of nature ("meaning is where / The object
are") to the emptiness of the perceiver, revers-
ing the relations upon which Pound's Imagism
and modern poetry have been founded.

That is why so much of his poetry hovers at
the point of death, seeking to give voice to an
awareness that has slipped from individual
nothingness. In poems like "Est in conspectu
Tenados", "The Red Admiral", "Narcissus",
"Burrington Combo", he strives towards a con-
dition in which the individual achieves a "con-
sciousness two-fold" of self and object, and
does so in language which has clarified its own
purposes till it almost fulfils the impossible
demand of "the clear line / Tremulous like
water but / Clear also to the unseen under-
neath".

Sisson's importance as a poet in England is
that he has managed, as almost no other con-
temporary poet has done, to take on board the
technical achievements of modernism without
being deluged - indeed, positively asserting - his
Englishness. That is significant (in England),
but though we can insist over and over that
poetry is about technique, or about tradition,
the poetry that matters matters because the
poet has the courage to pursue relentlessly the
implications - in language and in thought - of
his vision of the world: Sisson's *Collected Poems*
are witness to such a pursuit, and they matter.

Vox populi

J. C. H. Thompson

J. B. PRIESTLEY
Three Men In New Suits
152pp. Allison and Busby. Paperback, £2.95.
085031 6049
The Image Men
677pp. Allison and Busby. Paperback, £4.95.
085031 6030

"It is indeed the day of clever little novels, the
cocktails and sandwiches of fiction." Gazing
down in 1935 at the history of the English novel
J. B. Priestley judged that with the death of
Henry James an English tradition had come to
an end. There were no longer writers with the
energy to "lay hands on more and more of
life", only "freakish, invalidish, intellectually
flicking" men, like Forster.

The implication, clear to anyone who knows
how *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement*
had been received, was that Priestley was
himself the man to bear the flame; he alone
could carve shared values from the great joint
of English life. "Dickensian" was the term re-
viewers used, but Priestley, if he was flattered,
had reservations. He was antipathetic to Dick-
ens, in so far as he found his novels too worked,
his characters too fantastic and his social con-
science distorted by the demands of his im-
agination. Far from a people's novelist he
ended up, Priestley thought, writing to please
himself.

Sure of his aim, Priestley wrote determined-
ly for everyone, and when war came took the
chance the BBC gave him to become a voice of
the people, delivering for six months in 1940 a

"Postscript" a few minutes long to the Sunday
evening news. He began innocently, but then,
in July 1940, raised the contentious question of
"war aims", calling for a post-war nation that
would think, not in terms of profit and loss, but
community and creation. Overnight he drew a
ferocious hate-mail from the right-wing public,
and by the end of the year his contract with the
BBC had been terminated.

The issue of war aims, and an establishment
plot to silence any discussion of them, is the
linking idea of his wartime trilogy, *Black-out in
Gretley*, *Daylight on Saturday* and *Three Men
In New Suits*, only the last of which is now
reprinted. Priestley understood the war as not
simply a struggle with Germany, but the occasion
for a social revolution in England which,
with planning and propaganda, could be con-
solidated into a socialist new age when the war
was won. "It took bombs to deliver us", he
wrote, meaning that the threat of invasion
generated for the first time a truly popular
community of interest, perhaps even a national
change of heart.

The three men in new suits are demobbed
soldiers, divided before the war by their class
differences, united now in a brotherly ideal of
the future. They quickly find that the towns-
people, the munition workers on the home
front, share their hope; but returning to their
rural communities - the vested interest of the
farmlands - the atmosphere changes, becomes
deceptively placid, with the imminence of vio-
lence and conspiracy in the defiance of property
and power. Against this imperfectly perceived
threat Priestley's soldiers feel obliged to re-
emerge.

Having seen the demobilized forces of the
decent and (Gosse aside) honourable men, not
devoid of good sense.

Clean and decent

Chris Baldick

HAROLD OREL
Victorian Literary Critics: George Henry
Lewes, Walter Bagehot, Richard Holt Hutton,
Leslie Stephen, Andrew Lang, George
Saintsbury and Edmund Gosse
243pp. Macmillan. £22.50.
0333 361628

If, as G. H. Lewes wrote, the critic is "the
aesthetic Policeman", the critics whom Harold
Orel has written about were the chief inspec-
tors of their day. They were industrious, ear-
nest, heavily bearded, and uninspiring, plod-
ding behind Matthew Arnold as *Lestrade* does
behind Holmes. Under titles like *Critical Kit-
Kats* (Gosse) or *Hours in a Library* (Stephen),
they could gracefully distill impressions drawn
from their copious reading, but could never
convince themselves, as Arnold could, that cri-
ticism was ultimately more than a parasitic and
embarrassingly effeminate pastime. As a way
of overcoming this unease, some cultivated a
do-no-mess-at-all impatience with philosophy
or with poetic "moonshine" as Stephen habi-
tually called it. Bagehot and Stephen found
solace in the "manly" qualities of Walter Scott,
while Andrew Lang delighted in the stories of
Robert Louis Stevenson, because there were
no women in them. Writers of the past were
recreated in the same image: Bagehot felt con-
vinced that Shakespeare "was a judge of dogs,
was an out-of-door sporting man". Among the
indoor types, an alternative solution to the
problem was to flaunt one's parasitism as a
mark of patrician standing, as with Saint-
sbury's analogies between literature and wine-
tasting, or Gosse's preference for authors who
"can write about Nothing like a gentleman".

Professor Orel's purpose is to convince us
that there is more to the work of the Victorian
critics than this. In quantity, of course, there is
much, much more - the output of Lang and
Saintsbury in particular was staggering; as for
quality, Orel preserves the slightly greater re-
spect due to Stephen, and makes only one
convincing case for reconsideration. In his
chapter on R. H. Hutton. Regarded (if re-
garded at all) as a clumsy moralist, Hutton was
capable of a perceptive appreciation of
Arnold's poetry, and was early to recognize
Hawthorne's merits even while attacking him
relentlessly for his position on slavery. For the
rest, Orel is content to point out that they were

First World War abandon their radical reform-
ing ardour in exchange for government offers
of improved material comfort. Priestley hoped
that this time the democratizing effect of war
could be maintained. It could no longer be
claimed that the proposed Labour programme
would bankrupt the country; on the contrary,
the wartime success of massive and sustained
reflation, and the productivity of a state-control-



led industries, made an overwhelming case for
keeping up the war effort. It was essential that
servicemen fight on against "the secret empor-
ors and warlords of finance and industry".
"Listen - there goes the last high trembling
note of the *Last Post* - and now, listen again,
here comes the *Reveille*."

The reissue of *Three Men In New Suits* and
The Image Men was intended to celebrate
Priestley's ninetieth birthday, but in the event
he died short of it, making these his first post-

humorous publications. *The Image Men*, as a
birthday gift, was a perfect choice: the author's
last major work and his own declared
favourite. But as one of the first documents in
the assessment of a dead writer it could not
have been more ill-chosen. It was almost uni-
versally dispraised when it appeared in 1968
and has been ignored or apologized for in sub-
sequent monographs. It is in fact a latter-day
loose, baggy monster.

Its subject is the modern world; its theme,
dwarfed by the epic length, the need to huma-
nize it. So, the two heroes, through a research
and advisory bureau, the Institute of Social
Imagistics, set out to wator the desert of the
materialistic 1960s with unworring high spirits
and old-fashioned good sense.

Since the mid-1950s Priestley had been
grumbling about a loss of values attendant on
prosperity. "Vision has been replaced by tele-
vision", he said. The reflation he had deman-
ded made for a kind of bankruptcy after all:
soon our "spiritual cultural capital, accumu-
lated by past generations" would be gone,
burnt up by the speed of consumer life. The
now age had come, and he called it *Admass*:

the whole system of increasing productivity, plus
inflation, plus a rising standard of material living,
plus high-pressure advertising and solemnness,
plus mass communications, plus cultural democracy
and the creation of a mass mind, the mass men.

Reeling from future shock, he hated it all.

A passage from *The Image Men* illustrates
why, despite the early clamour of praise,
Priestley's novels have never been admitted to
the literary canon. "Moldy was still asleep but
hor coloured maid - whose name was
Dorothea, perhaps out of *Middlemarch* - care-
fully repeated the message and then, with a
gigggle, told him that Miss Meldy thought he
was a honeypot." The reference to *Middle-
march* is gratuitous. It has no significance
whatever within the novel. Priestley's texts,
forever laying hands on life, are supremely
uninterested in themselves.

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Arbiter elegantiarum

Jonathan Keates

EDWARD CHANEY and NEIL RITCHIE (Editors)
Oxford, China and Italy: Writings in honour of
Sir Harold Acton
246pp. Thames and Hudson. £18.
0500013519

"Time", says Vernon Lee writing *In Praise of Old Houses*, "has wonderful cosmetics for its favoured ones; and if it brings white hairs and wrinkles to the resilient, how much does it not brighten the bloom, brighten the eyes and hair of those who survive in our imagination!" Sir Harold Acton at eighty hardly needs such blandishments: he palpably endures, as we are reminded by a dust-jacket photograph which shows him looking what the more easily ravaged choose evocatively to call "absurdly youthful". Yet at the same moment, as one of Time's favoured ones, he survives in the imagination of those whose enthusiastic fires remain unquenched by *mal aria* of system and calculation pervading our century.

This handsome birthday present resembles one of the allegorical confections in which Baroque painters and composers celebrated their patrons. Here, for instance, is Poetry in the somewhat enigmatic form of Iris Origo, with some verses entitled "Childhood Denied". Whose childhood (surely not the indomitable Marchesa's) and what denial we cannot know, nor do these wistful lines much enlighten us on the point, but the poem offers an interlude of eloquent lyrical vagueness in the opening chorus of praise. We are not much the wiser with Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, beautifully dithering between a rhapsody on "Voi che sapete" and the implication that his old friend belongs to what Lady Louisa Stewart called "the genus mountebankum", while the late Laureate's "The silent lake through which I see / Is life and death at one in me", in an astonishing fragment scribbled during the 1920s in the garden of the Spread Eagle at Thames, introduces a whiff of admonitory solemnity.

Friendship figures in various guises: Joan Hadfield recalls Sir Harold clearing a Florentine restaurant with an impassioned rendering of Herod in Wilde's *Salome* (in which John Sutro had once intended him to star opposite Tilly Losch in the title role); Christopher Sykes remembers his extraordinary impact upon undergraduate Oxford and leaves us to ponder the significance of the observation that "his life can remind one forcibly of the *History of Penicillin* and many other of the works of Thackeray". And in bounces A. L. Rowse, the *terracotta* of the company, characteristically unblushing in autobiography.

We have of course been here before. Even in *pace* Sykes, Evelyn Waugh's Anthony

Blanche is far more obviously modelled on the altogether less resilient figure of Brian Howard, the famous declamation of *The Waste Land* through a megaphone to the Christ Church rowing hearties is now a hallowed piece of Oxonian. The episode is best conveyed in Anthony Powell's contribution, an Aubreyan life, in which he relates as follows: *Amicus*: Mr E. Waugh (auctor) of Herford Coll. with whom he was often merle in liquor. He was generally temperate in drinking, but one time, having been with his camerades, a frolic came into his head, and from his window in college he did declaim through a trumpet to those walking in Christ Church meadow verses writ by that sweet swan Mr Eliot.

A homage more lasting, in the form of a dozen densely researched essays on recondite Anglo-Italian topics, makes *Oxford, China and Italy* worthy of its object. Amanda Lillie gives us the early history of La Pietra, through an account of its association with Ghirlandajo's banker patron Francesco Sassetti, and Anna Maria Crino, examining Cosimo II de' Medici's baffled plans for marriage between various of his children and those of James I, lays bare the Grand Duke's wise proposal of a separate Ireland governed by Don Francesco de' Medici and Elizabeth Stewart, "which would still serve to maintain the said kingdom in peace... since the people, for the most part Catholics, as we understand, would remain tranquil under the government and dominion of this prince". John Fleming unties a bundle of letters from James Adam in Naples, busily in quest of "Antiquities" and "attaek'd in flank, front and rear by six battalions of duff and four squadrons of fleas". Hugh Honour makes us pine for the company of the quintessentially Actonian Capocelatro, Archbishop of Taranto, and there is a noble memorial of the connaisseur Brnon d'Hancarville from Francis Haskell.

By such a splendid process of obliqueness, what Sir Harold represents for us, the generous communication of the pleasures of civilized experience which the eighteenth century termed "polite learning", is better caught here than in the matches of memoir which open the book. The man, himself, not unpleasantly elusive. Somewhere in that Chinese landscape where he was happiest, the peonies and the pagodas receive him from our sight.

Kate Flint, in her *Impressionists in England: The critical reception* (390pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £17.50, 0 7100 9470), has gathered together a wide-ranging selection of the criticism which greeted the work of the Impressionist artists in the English press, including reviews by George Moore, Walter Pater, Bernard Shaw, Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Walter Sickert. In particular D. S. MacColl and R. A. M. Stevenson are shown to have praised and promoted the Impressionists who were at first widely misunderstood for their treatment of light and distortion of form.



A detail from Rembrandt's "The Blinding of Samson", reproduced from the book reviewed below.

Oriental imagist

John Nash

LEONARD J. SLATKES
Rembrandt and Persia
177pp. New York: Abaris Books. \$20.
089835 241 X

Leonard J. Slatkes's thesis is that "Rembrandt apparently believed that even relatively contemporary Persian and Moghul miniatures transmitted the social customs and dress of biblical days, and he used a variety of these elements to add a note of historical veracity to his work". In the first essay, on "Samson Fostering the Riddle to the Wedding Guests" (Dresden), the argument appears to be that in the late 1630s, Rembrandt also used oriental imagery in "open challenge to the classical tenets Sandrart propounded in Amsterdam at the same time". But the line of argument is heavily overlaid by miscellaneous notes on a variety of aspects of Rembrandt's complex and fascinating life and work, drawn from the packed research files which resulted from the prolonged gestation of *Rembrandt and Persia*.

Professor Slatkes proposes (among other things) that the "Blinding of Samson" (Frankfurt) was derived from a Moghul miniature; the "Woman at her Toilet" (Ottawa) is not "Esther" but "Bathsheba", the head-dress of Asenath in "Jacob Blessing Joseph's Children" (Kassel) is intended to be authentically oriental; Rembrandt must have read Josephus and Leonardo, known Jan van Hasselt, court painter to Shah Abbas I of Persia, met Joachim von Sandrart at an Amsterdam picture auction in 1639, and been the master of the Leyden painter, Philips Angel—all points worth making, but strung together like beads rather than woven into a single argument. Slatkes's most

pertinent proposal is that in quoting Leonardo's "Last Supper" in his "Samson's Wedding", Rembrandt anticipates the explicit parallel drawn between the two events by Joost van den Vondel, in his poem "Altaerghelennissen" of 1645. But Slatkes does not note how Rembrandt oddly turns the tables, not only literally, by making the wedding table subtly circular, but by putting in the place of Christ not his antetype Samson, but Samson's bride, his betrayer.

The second essay is altogether more cogent, being concerned to demonstrate that the famous painting in the Frick Collection does not represent a "Polish Rider", a "Prodigal Son" or "The Christian Knight" (all parties suggestions), but the young David going out to slaughter the Philistines and win the hand of King Saul's daughter Michal. Slatkes's notion of an established fact is questionable, and so he can write: "Since Rembrandt's 1656 inventory also listed a complete edition of Flavius Josephus, and he had used this same working for his 'Samson's Wedding Feast', it comes as no surprise that he turned to this important source once again" (my italics). But in other respects he is scrupulous and largely convincing. He argues that the so-called "Polish" outfit of the rider has its origins in the near East and was intended by Rembrandt to be appropriate for an Old Testament hero. He notes that once again a poem by Vondel provides a parallel: his "Hymnus of Lofzangh Vande Christelyck Ridder" of 1614 sees David as an antetype of the *Miles Christianus*.

In the third, brief, essay, "Some Religious Speculations", Slatkes argues that, for various reasons, including his choice of Samson and David as subjects for his brush, Rembrandt is unlikely to have been acceptable as a member of the Mennonite sect.

On and off the strength

Hew Strachan

MYNATRUSTAM
Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the
Victorian army
262pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 262941

In 1850 the readers of the *United Service Magazine* were treated (by Mrs Ward) to the lurid and enthralling adventures of Lizzy Gould. The tale of poor Lizzy was cautionary: her wayward husband had enlisted and in so doing exposed his sensitive and refined wife to the vice; coarseness and corruption of barrack-room life. The message was apparently simple—marriage and the army did not mix. Wives and children encumbered a regiment in its movements, put a burden on the soldier's income beyond that which it was designed to bear, and made demands of the Treasury in their need for housing and other material provision. There was too a psychological incompatibility, more clearly articulated in Freudian or Jungian vocabulary than in that of the Victorians. As a profession the army demanded that the soldier be—at least at times—brave and brutish, and (in the words of the *Herald of Peace* in 1858) "an useable instrument of killing". The army's reliance on "masculine" virtues, to the appearance of the "feminine", made for a tension between, not an integration of, the two elements of the personality.

However, it is a central point of Myna Trustam's argument that this was not always so. Indeed, for her, social relations, not physical or psychological factors, determine the pattern of sexual and family lives. In civil society in Britain, industrialization moved the centre of work from the family to the factory: the family ceased to be an economically productive unit, and the employment status of the wife—embodied in legislation such as the Factory Acts and the Poor Law—became distinct from, and dependent on, that of the husband. Dr Trustam sees the position of the women in the army undergoing a parallel change. In the eighteenth century, with supply and transport in civil hands, women—as sutlers, cooks, nurses, midwives, laundresses and seamstresses—were fundamental to the interior economy of a military train. But from the end of that century these ancillary tasks were progressively milita-

rized, and women confined to domestic and sexual roles.

The army's attitude to women therefore became increasingly ambivalent. Marriage on a limited scale had to be acknowledged as inevitable in a long-service army. Moreover women provided a confined but none the less vital range of services which meant that a small number could contribute to the cohesion and effectiveness of a regiment. Married soldiers proved less likely to desert, less prone to drunkenness and bad conduct, and less susceptible to disease. Since approval for marriage became a reward for good conduct, the situation was of course self-fulfilling. Those who married without approval or "off the strength" found their marriage unacknowledged and their wives excluded from any of the material benefits available to those "on the strength". Thus, Trustam argues, the army regulated the pattern of the soldier's family life. If he married "on the strength", it relieved him of responsibility for providing education, accommodation or medical care for his family. Whether his wife was "on" or "off" the strength, the soldier was (at least until 1870, and the situation was not much improved thereafter) exempt from the obligation to maintain her or their children. Family links took second place to military needs. The regiment became the soldier's family, and marriage was acceptable only in so far as it confirmed the regiment as the soldier's home.

All that Trustam has to say on this point will be instantly recognizable to a student of the Victorian army. What she argues is convincingly presented, and illuminated with remarkably apposite and well-chosen illustrations. But it suffers from a major contextual problem. Her focus is on the army at home. Although she freely acknowledges that much of the army in her chosen period was abroad, she obscures the degree to which its institutions were moulded by colonial service. The regiment became a home and family, and provided paternalistic benefits and welfare, precisely because British society was not available for most of the time to most soldiers. Rather than take the Victorian army as representative of similar trends in Victorian society, we must acknowledge that in many ways the army was distinct and separate from society. For example, Trustam attributes the higher marriage rate of the cavalry to its greater number of NCOs, but the

same phenomenon was evident in the Guards, and the cause seems far more likely to be the almost unbroken home service of these units. By contrast, line battalions spent more time abroad (although the 93rd Highlanders went to India in 1857, not 1847, and were consequently there for thirteen not twenty-three years, and the 42nd spent three times longer in Britain between 1815 and 1865 than Trustam allows). What is therefore at issue is as much how those infantry battalions related to (say) Indian or Canadian society, and how that affected marriage and family life in the army. How many Indian wives were there in British infantry regiments? Certainly the hold of the colonies became sufficiently strong for many men overseas either to take their discharge and settle or, more frequently, to transfer out of home-bound battalions into those newly arrived.

Furthermore, the problems posed for the army by marriage were as varied over time as over place. The most truly long-service army was that of 1815 to 1854. Service was unlimited, the army small, and the loss through desertion and death sufficiently low to be adequately met by new recruits. As men served longer, marriage and enforced celibacy were more pressing issues. The period 1854 to 1861 saw an expansion of the army for the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, and also a higher turn-over through casualties. Therefore, marriage rates fell. In 1871 short-service enlistment was introduced, and the problem of marriage during a soldier's career became less pressing: the War Office's attitude towards wives softened, and their financial position was rendered progressively more secure. Finally in 1886, the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s (which had embodied the army's acknowledgment of prostitution as a necessary alternative to matrimony) were repealed. The change in the military attitude to marriage was, however, no more than apparent. What had developed was the army itself: that process had rendered the difficulties of army families temporarily dormant.

Unfortunately these broad themes tend to become submerged in *Women of the Regiment*. They are, however, implicit in Trustam's conclusion, which makes a surprising but justified leap to the 1970s, and which shows that once again the regiment regulated family life in a long-service professional army.

early nineteenth century offenders could also expect to be suspended in a monkey cage in the main hall, or shackled by the wrists to a log for hours on end. But despite the harsh punishments meted out in the military schools, Cockerill asserted us that the boys "seem to have come to no real harm. On the contrary... the majority thrived on the discipline they received." It seems odd, therefore, that these admirably beneficial methods of correction are not more extensively employed today.

Food, as always, was a primary concern for boy soldiers. The bread and water provided in the Duke of York's black hole was probably not so very much worse than normal rations. Between the wars army food left much to be desired. Although Cockerill denies that food was ever consistently short or poor—boy soldiers were "always well fed", he asserts, but "many did not think so, for most had voracious appetites"—the reminiscences he quotes from ex-boy soldiers suggest otherwise. "I went to bed hungry every night", wrote one who had served in India. Some army stable lads supplemented their diet from the horses' weekly feed of bran mash and boys frequently resorted to stealing food. In the late 1930s apprentices at the Army Technical School, Cheshport, habitually wolfed the harvest festival displays of fruit in the garish canteen.

Cockerill provides numerous personal recollections of strict discipline, sub-standard living conditions and appalling food—all those things which, with (but quality of) leadership so abundantly inculcated on the playing fields of Eton, made Britain great. Yet this is essentially an affectionate book which celebrates boy soldiering. It is, as the subtitle indicates, the story of boy soldiers. It is not serious history.



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Jaroslav Seifert, poet of his people

Eduard Goldstücker

Although some Western observers were quick to point out that the receiver of this year's Nobel Prize for Literature, the Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert, is relatively little known outside his native country, if a random sample of Czechs were asked to name their most respected living compatriot, the eighty-three-year-old Seifert would without doubt be nominated by most of them.

Poets seldom attain this kind of popularity in nations which are fortunate enough not to have experienced periods of national oppression. But in the eighteenth century, some 150 years after the Czechs lost their national independence and with it their upper social strata of aristocracy and bourgeoisie, it was predominantly the handful of literati of peasant stock who initiated and led the movement of national revival. During the long process of emancipation the writers were assigned, or took upon themselves, the additional task of guarding the nation's interests and to this day whenever a crisis threatens or a disaster befalls the Czechs, their poets are to some extent looked to as substitute national leaders. This complicated phenomenon, deeply rooted in the past, thrives once more in the political climate of the last fifteen years. Poets translate popular hopes and feelings into words and are looked to for encouragement and consolation: he who wants to subdue the Czechs sees their poets as serious obstacles in his way and seeks to render them innocuous. Seifert's award should be seen in this light and not merely because he is the last survivor of the splendid pléiade of Czech poets which appeared in the wake of the First

World War, calling themselves proletarian poets and producing revolutionary works.

Seifert, son of a working-class family, published his first volume of poems in 1921 and, together with other young intellectuals, joined the newly-formed Communist party. In 1929, when that party's leadership changed its course (the so-called Bolshevization), seven foremost writers among its members, including Seifert, protested publicly and were expelled. Seifert, who had played a prominent part in the Czech avant-garde "Poetist Movement", after his break with the Communists worked as a literary editor, mostly in social democratic periodicals, and published one collection of poems after another. In the Munich crisis of 1938 and the subsequent catastrophes which lacerated and eventually destroyed Czechoslovakia, leaving its people dominated by Hitler, Seifert's poems were always in the front line of resistance. In those dark years he became the poet of his people, and he has remained so until this day.

In 1948, after the Communist party had seized complete power, Seifert was eliminated from public life for several years, but in 1956, immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, he was the first to protest publicly against the lack of freedom during the years of Stalinist terror. Harshly rebuked, he maintained a low profile until 1968 when, as chairman of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, I asked him to become chairman of the newly instituted Rehabilitation Commission with the task of redressing as far as possible the injustices suffered by writers during that second horrific period. His acceptance was his expression of solidarity with the democratic endeavour of the Prague Spring.

After the Soviet occupation of the country

which followed, I was obliged to go into—as I then hoped only temporary—exile. Seifert agreed to deputize for me as chairman of the Writers' Union during my absence. But as a consequence of the federalization of Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Writers' Union had to be wound up and replaced by two national unions. A Slovak Union was already in existence: Czech writers submitted the articles of their new union to the authorities, held their first congress and elected Seifert as chairman. But soon the great purge of 1970 started, and the new union was declared illegal and disbanded: the great majority of its members were forced into what amounted to banishment and forbidden to publish, their previously published books were banned and they were subjected to a wide range of harassment. For a number of years Seifert was prevented from publishing his new poems and his memoirs; they were available only in type-written copies or printed abroad. But, no doubt in view of his great popularity, about three years ago, at the time of his eightieth birthday, that prohibition was somewhat relaxed.

The report that the Prague authorities themselves congratulated the recipient of the highest honour ever bestowed on a Czech poet is good news. It means that the moment of great joy felt throughout Seifert's native country will not be spoiled "from above". Beyond that one cannot help wondering whether this event will be taken by the rulers as an opportunity to review their attitude towards the writers and that they may cease to damage the intellectual capacity and the spirit of the nation. After fifteen years of so-called "normalization" they should know that the spirit is, as the Swedish Academy wrote in Seifert's Nobel Prize citation, "indomitable".

about VAT on books. Its real target is newspapers and journals, and it would be impossible to leave books out. I may be the most unpopular man in publishing now, but I wonder if in nine months time I might not be seen as one of the best forecasters."

...

At the end of next month the people of Ipswich, Colchester, Wells, Cambridge, Norwich and Bedford will have a rare opportunity to meet writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, William Burroughs, Eugène Ionesco and Nathalie Sarraute. From November 22 to 26 these and other luminaries of the John Calder list will be on tour for a series of speaking engagements, courtesy of the Eastern Arts Association. Now that responsibility for the promotion of literature is being largely shed by the Arts Council under its new "development strategy", it is good to see that at least one Regional Arts Association is ready to take over the job.

Eastern Arts is fortunate, however, in having a full-time literature officer; only three of the twelve RAAs are so equipped. Laurence Stag spends some 8 per cent of the Eastern Arts budget on literary projects and says he would have no difficulty in spending a great deal more. His perception of the need for literary subsidy is quite different from that of the Arts Council's *Glory of the Garden*: "It is not true that literature is supported by publishing and the libraries; if you want to develop interest in literature you have to go out and create it, not just support for it."

The Glory of the Garden has landed Eastern Arts with some pressing problems. Currently there are five Arts Council writers' fellowships in their area, which will disappear next year unless some money can be found. The Arts Council's decision similarly to withdraw support from bookshops puts at risk a scheme for mobile children's bookshops in their region.

The Arts Council has left intact its "regional initiatives fund", to which Regional Arts Associations can apply for support for new endeavours in the literary field. It is this fund which is paying for the Eastern Arts publisher's backing of a small press distribution project, a scheme to put writers on local radio, a schools project involving literary magazines, and the

publication of a series of leaflets on how to get published, organize a reading, and so forth. The result is that Eastern Arts have cornered £25,000, one quarter of the regional initiatives fund for this year. And it is only one of twelve regions. Laurence Stag acknowledges that other arts associations may choose other priorities, but he feels that as far as literature is concerned, the Arts Council's policy leaves too much to chance.

...

It appears that the Scottish Arts Council's attempt to bring a truce between Ian Hamilton Finlay and Strathclyde Regional Council over the rating assessment of his garden-temple at Little Sparta has failed. Finlay fears that another raid aimed at seizing art-works from Little Sparta is about to be made by the Sheriff's office, in order to pay the outstanding rates on what Strathclyde considers to be a commercial art gallery.

As I reported last month, the Scottish Arts Council has persuaded the independent rating assessor to reconsider the status of Little Sparta; with a view to its qualifying for mandatory relief. But as the Strathclyde Regional Assessor, Mr Jack Wood, explained to me, his verdict would only change the description of the property; the rates to be levied would still be a matter for Strathclyde. Not only that, the new description would only apply from the current year, and there would still be the matter of previous arrears.

Mr Wood has visited Little Sparta, but he has not yet made up his mind about altering the description from "gallery" to "garden-temple". He only received the Scottish Arts Council's evidence in support of Mr Finlay a week ago: Strathclyde Regional Council continue to say that he is in rates arrears.

Ian Hamilton Finlay goes on receiving visitors to Little Sparta, but the strain is taking its toll. He describes Strathclyde Regional Council as "ignorant fanatics" who do not regard themselves as part of the United Kingdom. He says they refuse to discuss the matter with him at all. "I want no special rights. If the law says the rates were due. I would pay them."

If they go ahead and attack us again, we're not going to accept that position, because it is not legal." Embattled in Little Sparta, and waiting for the Sheriff's men, Ian Hamilton Finlay says, "I can't understand why the outside culture stands and looks on."

Letters

Cambodian History

Sir, — As a specialist in the field of South-East Asian history, I was encouraged to discover a whole page of your issue of September 14 devoted to recent books on Cambodia. Your reviewer, Anthony Barnett, however, seems to imagine that the mere avoidance of polemics is itself a guarantee of sound scholarship in the study of that part of the world. At the same time, in praising the short history of Cambodia by David Chandler, he finds it necessary to dismiss French scholarship on that country in terms which would be highly offensive in any other context. On its own level, Chandler's book is very competent; but it is far from being a major scholarly achievement by comparison with the (predominantly French) research on which it is based; and it is certainly not "the first objective account" in any significant respect. Its one weakness, as Barnett observes, is its failure to cover the seventeenth century at all properly; the book falls even to mention Cambodia's one Islamic king, and his wars with the Dutch in the 1640s. But your reviewer is quite mistaken in supposing that the omission is due either to lack of source materials or to the inadequacy of previous research. It has more to do with the author's willingness to present Cambodian history as mainly that of a land-based empire which fell victim to its landward neighbours (Thailand and Vietnam), without paying due regard to the maritime factor at any stage in its history.

Mr Barnett is right to raise the question of historical continuity and the need to relate the most recent and most tragic phases of Cambodian history to the patterns of conflict of earlier centuries. But it will only be possible to do that if we apply to South-East Asian countries the same standards of scholarship — and the same intensity of effort — which govern our approach to the history and politics of European countries. Those who have most conspicuously failed to do justice to Cambodia, as a country whose culture and politics are worthy of detailed study in their own right, are those Western journalists who imagine that it is possible to become an instant expert on an Asian country in a matter of two or three years, once it has come into the news or has become the focal point of international propaganda. What emerges from Michael Vickery's *Cambodia: 1975-1982* — although not from your reviewer's account of it — is that both traditionally and in the most recent periods Cambodian society is extremely complex. One cannot hope to come to grips with that complexity by pretending that the historical sources are inadequate or that all previous scholarship suffers from "colonialist" bias.

RALPH SMITH
100 Bedford Court Mansions, Bedford Avenue, London WC1.

Bibliothèque Nationale

Sir, — Yes, for ordinary users of the *salle de travail* the BN is now so efficient and agreeable a place in which to work. (It was not always so.) But have Anita Brookner and Hans van Marle never wished to use the manuscript room, with its little ritual game of *pousse-plaque*, or — worse — the printed book reserve collection (retrieve card, take lift, push bell, wait to be admitted) where it may take an hour to be granted the privilege of checking a single press variant?

The ever-tighter security leaves a growing number of loopholes: a favourite amusement of those grouped around the hidden coffee machine is to devise ways in which the system might be defeated. For smokers, however, there is little hope: passed off to the company of the auctioning paper-seller by *défense de fumer — même dans la cour* they are now confronted by a second stage: *Défense de fumer — même sous la voûte*.

CLIVE HART
Department of Literature, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex

Sir, — In his letter (October 19), Hans van Marle states that there is no equivalent at the Bibliothèque Nationale to the Woolwich collection of the British Library. This is not the case. The Bibliothèque Nationale owns a collection of books which are housed at Versailles; yet these books do not take twenty-four hours to be transferred to their patent location

as in London, but forty-eight hours. This estimate is, however, very optimistic. If the letter "V", which denotes books kept at Versailles, is not being served that day then the reader must wait another day before his application for these books is considered. Because of "staff shortages" the letter "V" figures on the list of unavailable shelfmarks about once a week.

PENELOPE WOOLF

12 Gordon Mansions, Torrington Place, London WC1.

Sir, — Hans van Marle's defence of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Letters, October 19) is well taken but cries out for one certain footnote. As a senior officer of the BN recently remarked in committee, and as I know from personal experience, "in the term 'Service Photographique', the word 'Service' is purely notional".

RICHARD ABRAHAM
23 Clifton Hill, London NW8.

Plato and Lesbianism

Sir, — I have not seen Michel Foucault's book *Histoire de la Sexualité* (reviewed by Michael Ignatieff, September 28), but Sappho and Plato are not the only classical Greek authors to mention that women might and sometimes do prefer each other, in love and in sexuality, to men. There are eight beautiful lines by Anacreon that must depend on a generally known cliché about the women of Lesbos. The lines (*Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, no 174) have been, as far as I can find, translated only by T. F. Higham (*Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation*) and by Quasmodao (*Lyric Greek*), but both men miss up the final point of the poem, which is that the desired girl (from Lesbos) is gazing for someone (*femine*) else.

I suppose it would be germane to Foucault's thesis that the women of Lesbos were also credited with generously applying their discoveries to men — this is what *Lesbismo* means (see Aristophanes).

ALISTAIR ELLIOT
27 Hawthorn Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Belief and Knowledge

Sir, — In his review of S. P. Stich's *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science* (September 14), Simon Blackburn raises an age-old question: whether or not phrasing according to different "folk" psychological categories reflects different states of mind. It is odd that what was once regarded as a straightforward answer to this question — that offered by the former masters of Dialectics — remains constantly disregarded in this current debate.

It will be generally agreed that whether I express a similar state of mind as a *wish* of mine, a *desire* or a *demand*, my phrasing simply expresses my current bargaining position in a wider context. It is strange therefore that when it comes to *knowing* or *believing* our current reviewers fail to notice that a similar state of mind is simply proposed on a different negotiating basis. If I state my position as a *belief*, I am taking into account possible dissent, whether such dissent is likely to impress me (in which case I am prepared to amend my position) or not (in which case I declare myself to be a "militant" believer). When, on the contrary, I state my position as *knowledge*, I am dismissing out of hand any possible negotiation. Similarly, when I am qualifying your *knowledge* as a *belief*, I am strongly suggesting that you should be prepared to negotiate as to its content.

This has consequences when it comes to the issue of making computers "conversation-friendly". Such an end does not entail providing computers with a near-infinite number of possible internal states corresponding to all human folk-psychological categories. It only requires that a few distinct states be expressed with a varying degree of consideration reflecting the computer's varying disposition to negotiate its views with us. In other words, the computer will only become conversation-friendly when it is prepared to take feedback seriously.

PAUL JORJON
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Computers and Artificial Intelligence will be the subject of a special issue of the TLS on December 2.

'According to Mark'

Sir, — Galen Strawson's review of Penelope Lively's *According to Mark* (October 19) could be taken to be an admirably effective demolition job on an outstandingly poor piece of work by an established and hitherto acclaimed novelist. So it might well seem to readers of the TLS who have not yet read *According to Mark*.

However, to at least one reader who — unlike Mr Strawson — had read Mrs Lively's new novel with pleasure and admiration, what seems most striking is Strawson's cool but almost gleefully pertinacious determination to misread the book.

Strawson is in a muddle about intention. He writes: "Gilbert Strong is not meant to be insipid, but Penelope Lively's attempts to convince us that he is an interesting man are unsuccessful." Mrs Lively does not tell us whether Strong is "interesting", or, indeed, "uninteresting"; he is an earlier twentieth-century man of letters whose biography the eponymous Mark (a professional biographer of today) is writing. Mrs Lively is a novelist who, in this novel, has chosen, with considerable delicacy and subtlety, to show how little of "lives" can be retrieved, no matter how enormous the apparent material, and how much depends on the personality of the retriever. Mark is not the "I" or "voice" of the book: he too, like Strong, is an invention of Mrs Lively's. Mark is indeed "insipid": that, I take it, is what Mrs Lively intended. He is also devious — like Strong, who is "insipid" as well. The earlier belletrist is mirrored in, but also refracted by, his biographer. And the long paragraph of quotation which Strawson blankly says Mrs Lively "attributes to Strong" is — to anyone who knows anything about earlier twentieth-century belletrists — a consummate piece of pastiche.

But Strawson's initial tactics continue right through his review. He cannot acknowledge that the novelist actually knows precisely what she is doing. His questioning of *glimmering pulses*, *Muzok/chatter*, *pars* which *rustle*, comes oddly from a member of the "Martian" generation. Mrs Lively's characters were not invented by her to waste a "two-and-a-half-hour train journey" taken by Strawson; their inconsistencies are the inconsistencies of people, not of types or stereotypes. "Nor do we have to accept what the novelist says": of course not — but who, in Strawson's opinion, is "the novelist"? He seems, from his final quotation, to suppose it is Mrs Lively. But he is mistaken, crudely taking the remarks of an invented character to be Mrs Lively's voice.

ANTHONY THWAITE
The Mill House, Low Tharston, Norwich.

Poet and Audience

Sir, — Every author would like to compose the review of his latest production. Writing in response to the TLS is a partial way of doing this. The practice is, however, justifiable only when some large-scale misprision has taken place. For all the objections voiced in his letter of October 19, Ian Jack alleges no such error. His main worry seems to be that Denis Donoghue failed to see *The Poet and his Audience* as a major contribution to the sociology of literature.

Some of your readers already acquainted with this book may feel that Professor Donoghue's painstaking critique did its author ample justice. There is little in *The Poet and his Audience* that cannot be found in the standard biographies of the writers concerned. If Professor Jack really felt impelled to enter into controversy, it would have been more fitting on his part to answer the inquiries raised by his reviewer as to his reading in the field of author-reception. Professor Jack's silence on the subject of, for example, the work of David Trotter creates doubts about his qualifications for undertaking his investigations in the first place.

PHILIP HOBBSBAUM
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We apologise for an error of transmission in the letter from Sir Garfield Barwick printed in our issue of August 17. The fourth paragraph should have ended as follows: "The evident end purpose of the action of the Governor-General was to bring about a general election — an opportunity for the electorate to break the deadlock."

Basil Blackwell

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I hope to see it

Rights versus refuse collection

Andrew Saint

DENIS HARDY and COLIN WARD
Arcadia for All: The legacy of a makeshift landscape
307pp. Mansell. £9.95.
07201 17437

For all its fantasies and evasions, William Morris's brand of libertarian socialism has shown tremendous tenacity in Britain. Though its authors are really pragmatic anarchists rather than socialists, this sparkling, original and thoughtful book is in the modern, resurgent Morris tradition. It amounts to a parable about tolerance. Its topic is the "plotlands", a neat, unexceptionable piece of planners' jargon used to denote the makeshift, self-built bungalows and shacks that mushroomed on tiny, parcelled-up freehold sites all over the south of England between the turn of the century and the Second World War.

A marginal subject, one might suppose: but in their opening and closing chapters Denis Hardy and Colin Ward use it to ask searching questions about the customary rigidities of house-building in this country. Who should be allowed to build and where? Outside cities, are planning controls which go beyond health and safety any better than expressions of class-based prejudice? Can we ever escape the inextricable, divisive, two-tier system, with the haves occupying their own freeholds and the have-nots paying their ceaseless tribute to one arm or another of the state? The issues are old, but the history of plotlands emboldens the authors to venture some fresh, practical and civilized answers.

Plotlands cannot be exclusively defined. The cry of the common people for their own land is ageless. From time immemorial, people have encroached and built upon "manorial waste". Radical squatting, as the first chapter recalls, goes back at least to Winstanley's protest at Walton-on-Thames in 1649. But the coherence of the plotland movement, leading to the creation of Peasehaven, Pagnam Beach, Jaywick Sands, Canvey Island and a score of other settlements detailed in this book, is different. It is a movement of landless city-dwellers, gaining speed after the trauma of the trenches, to ease their lot and spend what time they can in the sun and air. It takes place against a background of the best public transport and the lowest rural land-values that Britain ever had. Between 1900 and 1930 speculators found it easy to pick up riparian, estuarial or seaside land, often soggy and hard to reach, and chop it up into little plots which could be bought for a song. The purchaser might build immediately or in stages, depending on his means, or he might just wait. Frequently plots lay untouched for decades, their forgotten ownership a source of frustration to planners seeking to drain the land or abate nuisances.

The dwellings that did go up were vilified by all the contemporary commentators for the damage they did to the landscape. Now that they have mellowed or gone, it is easy to look

back on them with greater affection and charity. The inter-war period was, after all, one of reaction against Victorian permanence when people, having been abruptly reminded that life is short, began to opt for "short-life" solutions, egged on by gurus like H. G. Wells and J. D. Bernal. So they snatched themselves of huts of all types and sizes, discarded buses, converted trams, and above all redundant railway carriages. Examples of all kinds are shown in the book's charming but indifferently reproduced illustrations. Usually the railway carriages were single coaches (ten stood behind a hedge at Arnold's Babcock Hythe), but sometimes they came in combinations. At Shoreham Beach the fashion was to put two coaches in parallel and connect them to make an H; at Winchelsea Beach some plutocratic plotlanders ("rather dashing people with fast cars", a neighbour remembers) had a whole set. Not all plot-holders were working-class, by any means. On the south coast there was a smattering of shopkeepers and minor bohemians lured by the promise of an unregulated life-style. The greatest show of Cockney solidarity was on the Essex coast, at Canvey and at the ramshackle suburb of Joywick, in whose growth and welfare the veteran East Ender George Lansbury took a paternal interest.

Peasehaven, between Brighton and Newhaven, was the most publicized of the early plotlands. It was started by Charles Neville, a Canadian entrepreneur of doubtful probity, during the First World War. He ran a competition to decide the name: "New Anzac-on-Sea" won, but was thought better of. Neville promised public facilities which never materialized as a lure for servicemen to buy up his American-style, 25 x 100 feet plots with the lump sum they received on discharge. Peasehaven despoiled one of the handsomest remaining stretches of coastline in Sussex; its growth was painfully slow, and the local authorities ended up having to sort out the chaotic services and layout. Yet the residents soon developed a

deep loyalty to the place and resented the inevitable bureaucratic intervention. Such, everywhere it seems, was the mystique of freehold ownership. "We won't fight for rented property", affirmed a Basildon man on the coming of the new town in 1949.

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 was the plotlanders' Waterloo. It was an administrative document, designed to compensate for the weakness of its forebears and redress the balance between individual and community. Local authorities used it to erode these "eyesores" or get them converted into properly serviced homes with piped water and, if possible, electricity and main drainage. By this time the writing was already on the cabin wall. During the war many plot dwellings had been neglected; at Shoreham Beach, for instance, the "Bungalow Town" had been out of bounds and was therefore easier to suppress after a public enquiry in 1949. As people became more prosperous, they were less patient about poor amenities. Council houses had bathrooms and electricity; even caravans (a subject which the authors skate over too thinly) had services which made plot dwellings look primitive. Jaywick, to a generation which could afford a caravan or visit Torremolinos, was a very damp squib.

So the shacks began either to disappear or to be upgraded, according to the owner's whim and the local council's policy. Hardy and Ward trace this process through with as much care as they devote to the plotlands' first development. Though they are all "for the little man", they award good marks to the authorities for increasing tolerance. At Basildon, where the new town was carefully designated for an area containing no less than 6,000 unsewered dwellings, the development corporation learned to be conciliatory and plan its layout round many of the pre-war plots, waiting in some cases for the death of ageing owners before trying to purchase. Today, Basildon even has a nostalgic plotland museum and "trail" — an astonishing

about-turn in official taste, which would have any rural conservationist of the 1930s appal.

The rise and decline of the English plotland delicacy, skill and fairness. A polemical chapter risks superficiality by looking at analogues abroad. The United States, where much of the English movement derived, cannot be bitten off in a mere eleven pages, since a great proportion of original American housing was in essence plotland development. Though the English plotlands were few in number, they squarely misse the issues of the individual versus the collective good, of rights versus refuse collection. On the broad Western across the problems were different. European comparisons are more apposite, and there is an absorbing section on the "chalet gardens" of Holland and Scandinavia, basically suburban allotments where families sleep the night in sheds during the summer, not always with municipal approval.

Hardy and Ward then go on to touch on the shanty towns, not the *bidonvilles* of Paris or Rome, but those of Latin America, Asia and Africa. Following John Turner and other experts on Third-World housing, they plead that these should be seen out as danger to order and health but as creative expressions of need which, with careful coaxing and attention, can be properly integrated into the urban pattern. This leads naturally on to a final chapter in which the authors urge braver experiments in this country with plotland-style development, with builders and councils laying out a minimum of services and individual plot-taken then building as they want, freed from excessive regulation. In specialized, over-built, crowded Britain, these solutions will not solve the massive urban housing problem. But if Morris was right and people are happiest when they build with their hands, toil in their gardens and enjoy the sun and air, at least let Hardy and Ward's ideas be tried out on a larger scale than anyone has dared hitherto.

Affinities with nature

Stephen Mills

RICHARD MABEY
In a Green Shade: Essays on landscape 1970-1983
186pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
009 154320
NORMAN MURSELL
Green and Pleasant Land: A countryman remembers
138pp. Allen and Unwin. £8.95.
004 7990155

Apart from his deft and elegant turns of phrase, Richard Mabey's most immediate gift is enthusiasm. Not many people could write 3,000 words on the Ordnance Survey and keep you amused while they discuss whether the Buckinghamshire name for snakeshead fritillary should be rendered as *crawcup*, *crowcup*,

frocup, *frop* or, even, *frock-up*.

In *A Green Shade* covers sundry pickings from pages as diverse as those of *The Times* and *Harper's* or *Queen* or *Good Housekeeping* and *New Society*. Mabey offers us erudite little reappraisals of Richard Jefferies and Gilbert White, portraits of favourite landscapes colourfully dotted with local history and anecdote, and samples, twelve years old now, of his own pioneering investigations into the natural history of factory waste-grounds. Anyone, too, who missed the brief eruption of *Vale* magazine can here recapture a little of the flavour of a daringly literary ecological endeavour. Finally, one can relive a few days out of that enigmatic BBC experiment *Living In The Past*, in which a group of young people were brought together to construct and, for a year, to operate, an Iron Age village. The series irritated many viewers, but in Mabey it fostered a new respect for the achievements of our forebears and a new confidence in the viability of nature-based cultures. His account of the programmes is so wide-eyed that it prompts one to take another look at them.

Although the selection is meandering and informal, these pieces comprise quite a handy guide to the preoccupations of the intelligent Green Movement in Britain over the last ten years. For Mabey this is a movement founded on the quest for man's affinities with nature — not just tooth-and-claw affinities, nor even back-to-the-land ones — but rather those born of responsiveness to the natural world. Responsiveness depends on contact and contact is, of course, increasingly restricted by urban development, by technology, by ignorance and by attitudes to property. He claims to remember a childhood landscape adorned both with hedgerows in green angles and loving couples in pink. Now the green ones have been rooted up and the pink ones wedged into the back seats of cars. Responsiveness in both cases is diminished.

Mabey's own responses tend to be more cerebral than sentimental. A distant gunshot thrusting out at a hungry, solitary Brent-goose which he has been watching elicits from him not an emotive complaint against hunting for food but a political objection to a bird that was

once free for all becomes private property when it is shot.

Mabey is committed to democratizing the natural environment. He ands with a "longue-in-clac" fantasy about pay-as-you-grow strip farming, the return of gleaming so that all over Hertfordshire kitchen blenders are whizzing round to keep suburban families in wholesome flour for the winter, and a children's game called "Farmers, Keepers". This celebrates the ancient and unbelievable myth that the nation's land and its wild creatures were once owned exclusively by a few individuals.

To the average Yorkshire sheep-farmer, Richard Mabey may sound like an outsider, just a spokesman for weekenders and Home Counties eco-freaks. In that case, Norman Murrell is presumably an "insider" and his *Green and Pleasant Land* the genuine rural article. For fifty years he was a keeper for the Dukes of Westminster at their 12,000-acre estate in Cheshire, a little morsel of the nation where the animals have been exceedingly privileged for centuries. There the workers enjoyed the privilege of daily contact with nature, labouring for the Duke from 6.30 am to 7 pm. While they survived, the loyal ones received mince pies from The House every Christmas, and when they died, their widows could look forward to an annual compensatory blanket.

This was the Old Life, with which Norman Murrell assures us everyone was content. He is an old retdoor, schooled to a life of deference, recalling with pride, as if it were his own, the old Duke's prowess at strolling around snipping left-and-rights of snipe, while his employees got on with their work. Murrell's account of the running of a great estate is biased but so sincere that it must be considered a piece of documentation. His story is scattered with some rather flat anecdotes — and one of two charming ones: the ancient farmer who resurrected his gun to shoot rabbits and got his eyes filled with dust from the woodworm in the stock; the old lady who insisted that the local bobby block up her plug holes in case the electricity escaped. Anyway, most pages of the book are worth turning to for Robert McPhail's delicate little drawings.

In the poet's hand

H. R. Woudhuysen

R.J. CROFT (Editor)
The Poems of Robert Sidney
Edited from the poet's autograph notebook
354pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
019 812726X

"One of the most remarkable literary discoveries of recent times", the late P.J. Croft called it when he announced the existence of the Robert Sidney manuscript. The discovery was his own, and now just over a decade later he has produced a complete edition of its sixty-six poems. A modernized version faces a transcript of the often heavily revised and corrected drafts, and is accompanied by a detailed chronological table, a long introduction, notes and appendices. Altogether, from discovery to publication, Croft's is a fine achievement, made the more remarkable by the many obstacles and confusions which seem to beset Robert Sidney and his poetry.

To begin with he goes under the considerable disadvantage of being confused not just with one but with two other more widely known people. However romantic and disavowed his own life was, Robert Sidney could not escape that most crushing of all identifications — of being the younger brother of someone really famous. For well over two hundred years the painting of him now in the National Portrait Gallery was conveniently identified as an interesting picture of Philip Sidney. A great deal of scholarly effort went into showing that his unusual iconography related to the elder brother. Equally, Robert Sidney suffered, having been created Earl of Leicester by James I in 1618, from handwriting which, at a very superficial glance, could be mistaken for that of his more famous, and to some infamous, uncle, Robert Dudley, also Earl of Leicester. The Robert Sidney manuscript made its first public appearance at a London auction in 1833 when its compiler was correctly identified. Shortly afterwards it was rebound and lettered on the spine "Sonnetts by the Earl of Leicester. MS." and by 1843 the poet Robert Sidney had disappeared to be replaced by the courtier Robert Dudley as the Earl of Leicester responsible for the poems. Even during his lifetime there seems to have been a certain amount of confusion surrounding Robert Sidney: another unusual picture of a melancholy youth leaning on his balustrade, his armour at his feet and next to a shady tree, with a besieged fortress in the background, is listed in two contemporary inventories as being a portrait both of Robert Sidney and of Sir Thomas Knollys.

The correct re-identification of the author of the manuscript was only the first of the obstacles which stood in the way of restoring Robert Sidney's reputation as a poet. For more than 400 years the manuscript was kept at Warwick Castle and only came on the open market in 1974, when it was put up for auction at Sotheby's. Then it was bought in at £28,000 and emerged at the beginning of 1975 in the British Library. Croft does not reveal what commercial value was eventually placed on the poems — in 1833 they had fetched £5 10s, but had sunk to 32s by 1842. With the manuscript safely lodged in a national collection, in theory they were easily accessible to all, but in fact only if you could penetrate Robert Sidney's handwriting. Even his brother complained about it: "you write worse than I, and I write even worse than you". Lord Burghley thought Sidney was merely being wilful in producing his "ciphers", he knows you can write a better hand". Croft, whose palaeographical skill and expertise were unrivalled, has been more charitable about Robert Sidney's hand, referring to the "dynamic verve" and "tense energy" of his "nervous and highly individual" italic. The truth is that Robert Sidney's handwriting is not easy to interpret: it is interesting to note the minor differences that exist between Croft's transcription of Sonnet 25, "You that take pleasure in your cruelty", in his magisterial *Autograph Poetry in the English Language* published in 1973 and that in the present edition. And there are still a few insignificant errors in what Croft transcribes.

Yet one of the most puzzling aspects of Croft's edition is that he does not transcribe the manuscript in full. Words and letters which have been crossed or smudged out, or simply

deleted, are often ignored. This is a great pity for if Croft was not willing to interpret Sidney's first thoughts, who is? In the same way, it is disappointing that while a whole appendix is devoted to a detailed examination of the notebook's physical construction, comparatively little attention is given to the presence of different pens and inks in the manuscript and to the implications that these and the beginnings and endings of scribal stints have for what Sidney was doing in copying his poems into the book. Croft's transcript and occasional comments on the appearance of the manuscript are enormously useful, but one longs for more, and for more detailed investigation of the actual physical process of the writing and correction of the poems; for that is where the manuscript's uniqueness lies.

If Robert Sidney's handwriting appears impenetrable and, often, does the poetry itself. Croft seeks to illuminate it in three ways. First, he provides a modernized text, which despite a few oddities like "retchless" for "reckless" and "astranges" for "estranges", is generally very helpful. Yet it does lay itself open to the possibility of misconstruction. The beginning of the last verse of the last poem in the sequence reads in the manuscript "And if that dy I muat / fayer on sworde to fall / of Tyrant eyes, then pined in fetters sterue"; Croft modernizes the

last few words of this as "than pined in fetters starve". "Pined" here could mean, as the *OED* defines it, "exhausted or wasted by suffering or hunger" — the hunger would go with the starving. But "pined" could also be a form of "pinned", which would go with the fetters. Either meaning is possible: modernization is a form of translation, and in itself an act of interpretation. Assuming a specialized audience for Robert Sidney's poetry, one might wonder whether supplying a modernized version was strictly necessary. There is one already available, whose errors might be corrected in the light of Croft's edition: Katherine Duncan-Jones's version published in the Spring 1981 issue of *English* (Volume 30, Number 136, available from Oxford University Press, Journals Subscriptions Department).

The second aid to illumination, Croft's commentary, should assist us here, but it does not. Again and again one turns to his notes for help with the meaning of the poetry, for some sort of unravelling of Sidney's often very strained language and syntax, and so often one is disappointed. There is clearly a marked degree of disproportion between the twenty-four pages of rather perfunctory commentary which Croft supplies and the 124 pages of his introduction. While this offers a mass of interesting material it is by no means easy to use, for it is not always

obvious where a particular piece of information, or the discussion of a point in a poem, is to be found. An index or at least an analytical summary of what it contains would have been helpful, as would have been a table showing the order in which the poems are printed — the dual system Robert Sidney used of numbering sonnets and other poems in the sequence separately (Pastoral 7 follows Sonnet 15, for example) makes finding where the poems are far from easy. Surprisingly, there are many discrepancies between the poems as quoted in the introduction and commentary and the modernized versions Croft prints in the text.

The introduction's primary concern is to bring out the sequence's "underlying design", to show that it "is a more sophisticated work of art than would be apparent were it seen only as a collection of individual poems". Croft argues that "Ficino's theory of love is the key to Robert's sequence" and that its "overall design" is modelled on *Astraphil and Stella*. But where the elder brother wrote his sonnets while "still unmarried and nourishing an adulterous passion", his more virtuous sibling created "the purest Neoplatonic sequence in Elizabethan poetry", whose purity is not simply abstract and intellectual, but also sexual.

Croft gallantly takes on Lawrence Stone to show that Robert Sidney married the probably



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Lindsay Duguid

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Catherine, Her Book
179pp. New York: Cornwall Books. £9.50.
084534742X

Jane Austen in Australia has the novelist accompanying her aunt Jane Leigh Perrot on a visit to New South Wales in the year 1804-5, a year unrecorded in Jane Austen's letters. The fact that she was arrested, tried and acquitted of stealing lace from a shop in Bath in 1799 leads to the supposition that, having naturally contemplated the prospect of an enforced visit to England's penal colony, Mrs Leigh Perrot should then decide to go there on an expedition with her naturalist husband; it is further supposed that Jane Austen was at this time heart-broken at the death of the man she had hoped to marry and was therefore invited to go along. Thus she soon has her first sight of Table Bay; becomes prey to flies; hobnobs with an aborigine; and is somewhat attracted to a former highwayman.

These suppositions are dealt with in the early chapters of the book, which depict unexceptional scenes in Stevenson, Sidmouth and Bath - painted with a delicate wash of Georgette Heyer. Other episodes take place in the Austen household and in lodgings near the Angel where Mrs Leigh Perrot is committed for several months before her trial. These last are far from bloodless: brightly coloured and highly atmospheric, thick with thieves' cant, the smell of mutton chops and the conversation of the rather Dickensian Scadding family. Despite this, though, there is a feeling that the novel is somewhat artificial, as if the author has recycled to make a convincing story. The party sets sail and the voyage itself, via Rio and the Cape, occasions a larger cast of characters and more freedom in the writing;

discussions of slavery, prognostications of "machines for sewing" in a new industrial age, a history of the colony.

In New South Wales itself - first in Sydney, then in Parramatta - the slight figure of Jane Austen almost disappears against a background of Antipodean vigour - "the dust, the pigs tethered along the Tank Stream, the piles of refuse, the toiling convict gangs, the sweating soldiery". Here too is a dangerous social freedom, for the English visitors live at close quarters with prostitutes, convict-servants and "emancipists": even the higher stratum includes duellists, drunken judge-advocates and brave pioneer wives. Reverberations of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars are in the air and the only news of England is a six-month-old warning, relayed by American newspapers, of an invasion by the French.

The second half of the book moves at a brisk pace; Barbara Ker Wilson's rich material gets a little out of hand when there is an uprising of Irish convicts and Jane Austen sails back to England to work on *Sense and Sensibility*. Leaving aside the question of whether the book offers a true portrait of the artist (she is shown as both roguish and opinionated), we are given an enjoyable account of early Australian life and an original view of early nineteenth-century English history. Despite occasional anachronisms of expression *Jane Austen in Australia* offers some rewarding contrasts; incongruity in part of its appeal.

It is not incongruity but artificiality that makes Joan Aiken's *Mansfield Revisited* so unsatisfactory. In recounting the fortunes of Fanny's younger sister Susan - who figured in the original novel as a hoydenish teenager removed in her turn from the contamination of Plymouth - Joan Aiken has tried to make capital out of the Bertram family and their dependants. Of the original cast, only Lady Bertram remains unchanged. Sir Thomas and Mrs Norris (who might have presented a stronger challenge to the author) are both dead, Fanny and Edmund are absent in the West Indies, and the book, and the reformed Henry and Mary Crawford are unrecognizable. Two new characters, Mrs Osborne and Mr Wadham, are taken from stock: the former loosely based on the character of Mrs Croft in *Persuasion*; the latter an insubstantial gentle-

man and possible suitor for Susan. What becomes of them all is, despite a death, three proposals, and first-hand news of Maria's adulterous adventures, a flat concoction.

Putting it together Aiken employs some more-or-less period language ("I am persuaded, ma'am", continued Edmund Bertram with half a smile...) and turns some Austenish tricks (a ball, to be belle of, a disappointing picnic, a gravel walk) but the whole does not ring true. Unlike Barbara Ker Wilson, Aiken makes nothing of her own from the original material. The scene-setting is not implausible, the characters are not grotesquely wrong, but we still feel affronted that *Mansfield Park* should have been capitalized on in this way.

Purportedly the journal of the young Catherine Earnshaw, discovered and rewritten by her sister her marriage to Edgar Linton, *Catherine, Her Book* has a single viewpoint and a single voice. As an object, the journal is carefully authentic. It is written in four ancient volumes of the works of John Bunyan; "tiny hieroglyphs adorned or defaced the... volumes. I began to decipher the tiny letters." Catherine Earnshaw, her book. July 24, 1774. Heathcliff was being punished." The novel consists of Catherine's personal account of Heathcliff, Hindley, Nelly and Joseph at Wuthering Heights, an account which has more affinities with a soap opera than Emily Brontë's novel. Nelly and Hindley are lovers, as are Catherine and Heathcliff; Nelly and Heathcliff are Mr Earnshaw's illegitimate children; Catherine watches Nelly and Hindley making love; Catherine and Heathcliff make love on the moors; their love is forbidden since they are really brother and sister; Edgar is "the gentlest and most understanding of husbands" and so on. The claustrophobic unreality of these reminiscences is increased by the narrator's tone, which is that of a breathless teenager. There is a series of "discoveries" of a seasonal sort which ends with a brooding "Codicil", dated Thruscross Grange, September 30, 1783, about "the little leap of life in my womb" and predicting "something in me will split and my own life will go on leaking out in crimson. Accepting my death as I do, I know because I will it that I shall not die before I come to term." This at least disposes of any doubts about the future.

Intelligent and passionate; by her rich use of symbols and metaphor she transforms feminist cliché into something alive and moving. Her poetic gifts, which turned the screw of intensity rather uncomfortably in her two semi-biographical novels (*A Piece of the Night* and *The Visitation*), are seen to better advantage here. The shadow of the author speaking about herself and other women is often felt, especially in the descriptions of Mary laboriously writing her book; but when she is more oblique Roberts says more about women's condition without seeming to wallow in self-pity.

In *Nuns and Mothers*, a joke but vulnerable heroine explores her Catholic and American past through an intense lesbian affair. Helena is the heroine, with husband and children in England, Georgia the long-suffering American lover with whom she revisits her childhood sites. Both were at Stella Maria's convent, which was "so filled with Sapphic emotion, with volatile female passion; it would ignite at so much as a syllable of any explicit word like 'lesbian'." The book is funny and perceptive, especially about nuns, mothers and the shifting insecurities of the relationship between the two women. Structurally it is clever too - layers of the past, childhood, the convent and her brief affair after it, are revealed in a lovers' game of retelling significant events to each other like a litany. The author is keen to find a language (she would make a pun on the word) for lesbian sex - too keen for my taste. But what is a feminist writer to do? Remaking oneself (and other people) by remaking one's past in a novel must seem tempting: too many people have done it, as if it were an essential rite for joining the sisterhood. But Alison La Tourrette's novel - her first - is accomplished enough to please even uninitiated readers.

Mating song

Linda Taylor

JULIA O'FAOLAIN
The Irish Signorina
187pp. Viking. £7.95.
0670800422

"... this villa was the setting for a short-story dialogue on love... Platonic love mostly then written up by some humanist... A poet game" he apologized.

The villa, owned by the ageing Marchese Niccoloso Cavalcanti, is in Tuscany; a young Irish woman, Anne, is the guest of the Marchese. Once more, the villa is the setting for a dialogue on love - a debate which embraces a whole network of complexities involving family ties, political affiliations, the recent and the ancient past.

The Irish Signorina begins and ends with mourning. Between death and death, the lives of the characters are filled with ghosts. The Cavalcanti family is steeped in its own past: the name of the Marchese's son, Guido, is a remembrance of the fourteenth-century poet, the friend of Dante whose canzone on the nature of love was studied as a philosophical treatise. Guido's son, a revolutionary, is called Nen, recalling the "Black" faction in Florence, opposed to the Bianchi, of whom the original Guido became leader. These hints of old debates and opinions, of battles and allegiances, are central (if obscurely so) to the way in which Julia O'Faolain's latest novel grapples with the nature of life. On the one hand there are compromises, lies, patchings up, dullness, death and marriage; on the other, passion, terrorism, change, wildness and sex. Anne's own parents (both dead) took opposing sides: "her mother had an unsafe laugh and her husband, the bomb expert, had handled her with care." Too careful of the wife who craved passion but had married him for safety, the bomb expert died when a bomb he was defusing exploded in his hands. The mother, in fact, was a spent shell, her energy all wasted in a love affair with Guido which began twenty-five years before Anne's present visit to the villa.

The plot - Anne falls in love with Guido who turns out to be her real father while Nen involves her, marginally, in a terrorist conspiracy - provides the bones for the real stuff of the novel: the debate between romanticism and rationalism, in which the characters are more at war with themselves than, as they seem to be, with one another. "Judicious, practical and controlled" (according to Niccoloso), Anne "still found herself arguing with" the ghost of her mother "who was by now an extension of herself. The impulse to identify or reject... made memory narcissistic. It was like giving your attention to someone wearing mirror sunglasses."

Is it more passionate, the novel asks, to love spiritually, as in the old Count Bonaccorso's obsessive platonic feeling for Niccoloso, or lustfully, as in Anne and Nen's comforting night on the library floor? (Is passion, anyway, a part of love?) Or is it better to reject idealism and just for the pragmatic alliance - money, property and safety as the basis for marriage? O'Faolain provides no answers - everyone in the novel is defeated, cheated by life (its mortal appetites and energies) or God (God is love, or is He?) or fervour (political factions are based on infiltrators and cover-ups). Guido, the skilful lawyer, unhappily, pragmatically married, preaches that love is ennobling. Bonaccorso sees "all that spew Guido had tossed forth [as] nothing but a mating song" - to catch Anne. Anne, the rationalist, plans to throw caution to the wind; to disregard taboos of incest; to live, as all the Tuscans seem to live, by stealth and lies; to marry (?) Guido.

Cavalcanti the poet affirmed burningly, with its impetus to passion and violence. He gave man a country, a vocation, a political party, a character - the language of realism, philosophically and artistically displayed. His centuries later, realism has lost its liberating spark. O'Faolain's characters, cynical, depressed and oppressed, are unconvinced by their own philosophical arguments; the world she portrays is dark, convoluted, Machiavellian. As Guido says to his mother and Anne, "we three, laughing over our champagne... are in a long and pessimistic tradition. Our is a sad laughter."

Fielding a full eleven

Reginald Hill

BERNARD BENSTOCK (Editor)
Essays on Detective Fiction
218pp. Macmillan. £10.
0333321952

GLADYS MITCHELL
The Saltmarsh Murders
287pp. Hogarth Press. £7.95 (paperback, £3.95).

REX STOUT
The Hand in the Glove
284pp. Hogarth Press. £7.95 (paperback, £3.95).

RAY HARRISON
Death of an Honourable Member
154pp. Quartet. £7.50.

RUTH OUDLEY EDWARDS
The Saint Valentine's Day Murders
181pp. Quartet. £7.95.

JOHN GREENWOOD
Mosley by Moonlight
150pp. Quartet. £7.95.

In *Essays on Detective Fiction*, eleven critics take on eleven crime writers, man and wife counting as one flesh in both teams. The editor Bernard Benstock puts himself in last, wisely perhaps as well as modestly, since his essay (not actually) follows the dictat of his editorial introduction with an exemplary precision some of his team find hard to match. In this introduction he pleads that the *auteur* theory is fashionable a little while ago in film criticism might provide a useful approach to detective fiction, and in his own essay on Stowall and Whilock's Martin Beck, this works beautifully. Benstock is helped, however, by an aspect of the Beck novels which he admits is rare in detective fiction, namely that the authors have set out consciously to analyse the condition of their society through the series.

Such an aim is not, of course, a prerequisite of "serious" fiction, but it helps, and the difference between literature as social critique and literature as sociological evidence can be marked by setting this closing essay alongside the opener on Agatha Christie. It is Christie and the other Great Puzzlers who present the problem central to serious criticism of the genre. The pulp can be ignored, but not the big-name best-sellers, so inconsistencies creep in from the start as one critic adopts a sociological stance (as here in the Christie essay), while another praises the intellectual puzzles (as in the essay on Dorothy Sayers), and a third makes claims to absolute literary merit and genuine re-readability (as in the essay on Ngaio Marsh). None of these essays is without interest and insight, but there is a perceptible and significant change of gear as the collection moves on from the British (*pace* Marsh) to the American dead. Hammett and Chandler surely no longer need any special pleading on their behalf. By almost any critical test, they are fine writers and the essays here get to grips with the nature of their achievement in a workmanlike way. In their all-pervasive comes a third private-eye novelist, Ross Macdonald, whose work I have always felt to be dangerously overrated, so it is perhaps not surprising that I found the essay on him distressingly overwritten.

The living English, P.D. James and Peter Lovesey, are treated fairly if a little dully, and then we end up with the Continentals, in which group I include the expatriate Nicholas Freeling, who has done more for our sense of Europe than fifty Councils of Ministers. The Freeling essay is limited to the Van der Valk novels, and his author, Carol Shloss, keeps her eye firmly on her chosen topic, which is the novelist's examination of the "official world", but all the time we can feel other aspects of this complex author crowding in. Similarly, Pierre Walz's essay on Simenon has to pick its way carefully through the profusion of material offered by this most productive of writers. And so we return to Professor Benstock's meticulous and fascinating account of Martin Beck's career. A theory aside, it is hard not to end up judging in terms of absolute talent, and perhaps the truth is that crime writing still finds it hard to field a full eleven at the highest level.

Nevertheless *Essays on Detective Fiction* demonstrates yet again that there are many openers of international class and, dropping down to minor county level, there is a profusion of talent few other literary sub-genres can begin to match.

The combination of such richness of talent with an equal richness of productivity can result in much that is valuable and entertaining sinking deep beyond ready recovery. The Hogarth Crime reprint series has been launched to rescue the "unjustly neglected", itself often a questionable concept, but one more than justified here by Hogarth's first two resuscitations. Gladys Mitchell, whose output of over sixty crime novels almost predetermines neglect, is represented by *The Saltmarsh Murders*, a lively spoof of the "Guilt at the Vicarage" tradition, narrated by a Wodehouse curate who muddles about on the fringes of a crime involving murder, smuggling, bastardy, secret passages and a whole host of dotty characters till the dottiest of them all, not-yet-Dame Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley, acts as both God and His instrument in putting things to rights. Here is sheer delight, almost equalled in the other Hogarth reprint, Rex Stout's *The Hand in the Glove*. Never having been much of a Nero Wolfe fan, I was relieved to find that this featured one of his detectives, intrigued to discover that this was a female gumshoe called Dol Bonner, and delighted to be plunged into a 1930s private-eye world well up to snuff in terms of wise-cracking, punchy prose and high society mayhem. Both books have introductions by Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, informative enough to interest the aficionado, yet short enough not to deter the casual searcher after a good read. Stout and Mitchell are minor county players without a doubt, but re-readable in a way that many pre-war successes in the big league of the "serious novel" will never be.

Harrison's experience in the Inland Revenue's fraud squad obviously stands him in good stead in his writing, and Ruth Dudley Edwards is another who dips into her store of professional experience for her material, though how long she can continue putting her civil servant hero, Robert Amis, in the way of murder might prove problematic. Already, in *The Saint Valentine's Day Murders*, she is undertaking the difficult task of implanting the crime novel of character with the kind of often rather dotty crime so beloved of the Great Puzzlers. What happens is that Robert Amis, seconded to the British Conservation Corporation, finds himself put in charge of Purchasing

Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

ELIZABETH IKONEIDE
A Very Private Enterprise
256pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0340352698

When Hugo Frencham, a senior diplomat with the British High Commission in New Delhi, is murdered, security officer George Sinclair is sent out to sweep the ends under the carpet. But the mess refuses to be tidied up. George discovers a possible defector in the Russian embassy, makes an enemy of an Indian war hero, falls in love with a postgraduate student of Tibetan culture and visits Ladakh with her. A really excellent first novel: original and interesting characters, great atmosphere, good action, and a genuine surprise in the tail.

MICHAEL DELAHAYE
The Third Day
300pp. Constable. £7.95.
0094653402

It is 1989; the new US president has threatened to withdraw all military and economic aid from Israel if the territories taken from the Arabs in 1967 are not returned. But the Israelis have an incomparable blackmail weapon at hand, with which they can force the Vatican to put pressure on the States: they have discovered the skeleton of a man crucified in the first century AD. A more than competent thriller with a good, well-executed plot, *The Third Day* is on a much larger scale than Michael Delahaye's excellent first novel *The Sale of Lot 236*, but in the process of growth has lost a good deal of the earlier book's individual originality.

H. R. KEATING
The Sheriff of Bombay
211pp. Collins. £6.95.
0002317354

While engaged on the embarrassing task of escorting an ageing British film star round the streets of Bombay, Inspector Ghote stumbles across the still-warm body of a prostitute; in the subsequent investigation his normal sense of social inferiority becomes almost unbearable when his chief suspect turns out to be the famous Randhir Singh - known, justifiably, as Randy - the Rajah of Dhar, Sheriff of Bombay, former captain of the Indian cricket team and idol of the public. Vintage Ghote, splendidly told, with real feeling for the Inspector's predicaments.

Quartet are also building up an interesting crime list and are now publishing second novels by the writers on their original list. In *Death of an Honourable Member*, Ray Harrison offers another case involving Victorian City of London police detective, Sergeant Bragg, who is by Cribb out of Cuff, and none the worse for that. Here he is instructed by the Commissioner to enquire with discretion into the death of a City MP which the coroner has already, and perhaps over-hastily, adjudged to be accidental. Nicely paired with Constable Morton, son of the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, player of first class cricket, and shoulder-rubber of the highest in the land, including the PM who is personally interested in the present case, Bragg proceeds with caution but also with dogged persistence. Readers who like their Victorian reconstructions served up with a pea-soup of atmosphere may be disappointed here. Harrison does not omit authenticating detail but he is more concerned with narrative pace than local colour. The guilty party turns out to be the most obvious suspect, but this doesn't matter as the whys and wherefores are woven into such a complex pattern that our attention is always held, while the interstices are filled with gently amusing sketches of a policeman's lot.

Harrison's experience in the Inland Revenue's fraud squad obviously stands him in good stead in his writing, and Ruth Dudley Edwards is another who dips into her store of professional experience for her material, though how long she can continue putting her civil servant hero, Robert Amis, in the way of murder might prove problematic. Already, in *The Saint Valentine's Day Murders*, she is undertaking the difficult task of implanting the crime novel of character with the kind of often rather dotty crime so beloved of the Great Puzzlers. What happens is that Robert Amis, seconded to the British Conservation Corporation, finds himself put in charge of Purchasing

Department, Branch 2, which turns out to be where the no-hopers are sent to rot. One of them rots so rapidly that he sends poisoned chocolates to all the department's women-folk on St Valentine's Day with devastating results. This is good stuff to make us puzzle, certainly, but Edwards wants us to believe and care as well. It is a measure of her ability that in the end she undoubtedly succeeds, though PD2 needs a pretty strong suspension of disbelief.

Pride of place among the recent Quartet offerings must surely be given to John Greenwood's *Mosley by Moonlight*. Detective Inspector Mosley, whose patch is located where the Pennines straddle the Yorks-Lancs border, is a splendid creation. Regarded by his superiors as sometimes a Machiavel, often a clown, and always a nuisance, he takes care of crime in his constituency, rarely resorting to the charge sheet, and a comic highpoint of the book is reached when these same superiors find themselves faced with a sudden inrush of crime reports from Mosley, all concerned with local dignitaries who are accused of offences ranging from "exposing for sale a native leveret to the month of June" to "whilst acting as a street collector for charity, being accompanied by an animal". Their hopes that here may be the first signs of a breakdown which will lead to early retirement are quickly dashed as Mosley reveals he is after larger game, to wit, the truth at the centre of the mystery surrounding the disappearance of a would-be squire's unhappy wife and the parallel disappearance of his obliging German "housekeeper" five years later. Witty, literate and nicely observed, with good round characters, shrewd detection and not a little suspense, *Mosley by Moonlight* is a perfect example of the old English craft of country comedy. All the proper pleasures of detective fiction are here, plus the transforming bonus of genuine laughter.

addition is no slouch at putting one word after another to provoke a giggle, it's a pity sentimentality and self-indulgence have been allowed to dominate.

ED McBAIN
Jack and the Beanstalk
250pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
024112702

Given the boot by his girl-friend Dale O'Brien - she of the glade-green eyes - Florida lawyer Matthew Hope soon replaces her with a delectable blonde farmer old enough to be his mother. And at the same time involves himself in a couple of nasty murders and some very dubious business deals. This is the fifth Ed McBain novel set in Florida with a fairy-tale title and Matthew Hope as its hero: like its predecessors, it is stick, entertaining and professional. But there is still a school of thought which wonders why on earth McBain should waste his time writing about Florida when the 87th Precinct is still available.

GLADYS MITCHELL
The Crozier Pharaohs
189pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.
0718124723

Gladys Mitchell died last July at the age of eighty-two; *The Crozier Pharaohs* is the third and last of her books to be published posthumously; it brings the total, since *Speedy Death* in 1929, to the extremely impressive number of sixty-six. It cannot honestly be said that there is a great deal of detection in this story of two sisters, Bryony and Morpeth Rant, who breed Pharaoh hounds; originally the hunting dogs of Egyptian kings and nobles and therefore undoubtedly the oldest domesticated dogs in the world; whose Labrador, Seklmer, is stolen; which leads to the discovery of one corpse with head bashed in and another with throat cut. But the novel is as elegantly written, as unmistakably Mitchellian as ever; and devotees will get a great deal of pleasure from the conversations between Dame Beatrice Lestrangle Bradley and her athletic assistant, Laura Gavin.

New myths for old

Emma Fisher

MICHELLE ROBERTS
The Wild Girl
181pp. Methuen. £8.50.
0413328207
ALISEN LA TOURETTE
Nuns and Mothers
213pp. Virago. £9.95.
0860685551

"Novel" seems a strange word with which to classify *The Wild Girl*. It is a Christian feminist testament, in the form of an autobiography or fifth Gospel by Mary Magdalen. Mary appears in all the Gospels as a follower of Jesus who was present at the crucifixion and saw Jesus after his death. The author assumes that she is the same person as Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus, and also as the sinful woman who washes Jesus's feet. This Mary Magdalen becomes Jesus's lover and follows him for the last year of his life. Her dreams and revelations are interspersed with the narrative. She talks to Jesus about some of them, and he preaches on similar themes. Her dreams include new myths of the creation and of the world, and others personifying processes within the mind; for instance a mystical marriage of male and female as a means of reaching spiritual wholeness. The book ends with a revelation of nuclear holocaust, described in the language of the Apocalypse. A voice says to Mary: "Take this vision, and eat it up, and swallow it and digest it well. And afterwards write it down in your book. First of all it will make your belly bitter and painful, but then the words in your mouth shall be as sweet as honey." Mary leaves the daughter she has had by Jesus; and the domestic life she has been en-

joying, to prophesy to many nations what she has seen; she is never heard of again.

Michelle Roberts says in her introduction that in the process of dissecting the myth of Mary Magdalen, she found herself creating a new one. This new myth tries to tell us how to be happy, how to live, how to save the world, how to solve the problems of relationship between women and men. At the same time, she also gives alternative, non-miraculous versions of many events in the Gospels. Lazarus is not really dead; Mary has put him in the tomb as part of a magical rite to cure his illness. The feeding of the five thousand is a "miracle" of Martha's good housekeeping. Most important of all, Jesus did not rise from the dead. His preaching about resurrection is replaced by a quite different idea: spiritual rebirth during life by entering eternity through the body, or knowing God by being fully human. He preaches this doctrine most fully to Mary alone. Mary sees Jesus in the garden after his death, but acknowledges it to be an inner vision; the male disciples - it is suggested - claim falsely that Jesus has appeared to them too, this time in the body. It is the culmination of their quarrel with Mary. Led by Simon Peter, who is anti-women and anti-sex, they have all along resented her closeness to Jesus and her tapping out of women's traditional role. In claiming the physical resurrection of Jesus, they reject Mary and his true teaching, and set the course for a male-dominated Christianity, in which God is only Father and not Mother, and women are subservient to men and cannot be priests.

At least, I think this is what happens. Like all the best revelations, the book is obscure. Its obscurity is part of an intentional complexity. Some feminists will find in it a convincing message for their new religion. Michelle Roberts is

John Coyle

In tune with the texture

Christopher Wintle

MICHAEL HALL
Harrison Birtwistle
186pp. Robson. £8.95.
0860512703

An air of incredulity accompanied the emergence of Harrison Birtwistle as a composer during the 1960s. He began his professional musical life as a school-teacher, flopping around Cranborne Chase in carpet-slippers, playing jazz on the clarinet to the girls, and writing scores that were notorious for their rhythmic complexities. After this, he devoted himself entirely to composition, and, winning a fellowship, travelled to America in the company, allegedly, of a large number of toy instruments, with which he appears to have shown a Ravel-like obsession. The Establishment were astonished by his name and appearance alike, and many academic feathers were ruffled by his claim that he could happily rewrite his music using different notes without doing any essential damage to it. His early works, too, included baffling failures as well as some undeniable successes: if *Monodrama* and *Three Lessons in a Frame* (both 1967) seemed inept, then the remarkable and exhilarating *Tragoedia* (1965) established the extremes that his later works have explored so tenaciously: a shrill, iconoclastic violence on the one hand, and an uncanny, lyrical repose on the other. Yet even the appearance of so many new scores in recent years has not dispelled the old doubts, and the works can still seem as much triumphs of idiosyncrasy as of musical learning.

Something of this incredulity is shared by Michael Hall in this preliminary, but timely, monograph (Birtwistle was fifty this year). "Could this musical system survive the ravages of time", he asks at the end of some slightly obscure analysis of *... agm* ... a work based on the Sappho fragments rescued from "the ruins of the ancient world". You are the judge, but the book is too well constructed. It is a highly pertinent question, and one that elicits an articulate response from the composer in the closing pages of the book. In his aesthetic, Birtwistle seeks for no innate continuity between a basic musical shape and the larger musical idea, an attitude that contrasts sharply with the essentially nineteenth-century view of Schoenberg and his followers. Rather, his vision of the whole appears to relate primarily to the characteristics of musical textures and their juxtapositions. The notes themselves are often derived at random (Birtwistle hoards old computer print-outs), and are absorbed into their larger contexts only after being subjected to various kinds of permutation, articulation and modification. (These processes are sometimes so elaborate as to remain inscrutable.) Like other composers of this century, he justifies his aesthetic by drawing analogies with other arts, especially sculpture, where he sees the raw materials preserving their identity, whatever the shapes may be that are derived from, or imposed upon, them. Most importantly, perhaps, he considers that this sense of the *otherness* of his own materials releases him from a dependence upon intuition for the generation of his basic shapes. Intuition, in his view, merely regurgitates what it has already absorbed.

It would be nice to think that this exposition of views could allay the anxieties of critics. In effect, it is more likely to sharpen the ambivalence of their response. And Hall himself is better at dealing with the background to Birtwistle's visions - Greek tragedy, classical mythology, early English drama, painting, and cinema - than with the more directly musical issues. He conveys a good impression of the music's immediacy but draws insufficient comparisons with other composers to put Birtwistle's aesthetic into an appropriate context.

Instead, he relies too heavily on binary oppositions to reinforce his central thesis that Birtwistle is perpetually recomposing the same piece. Thus we have Bergson's clock time and intuitive time, Jung's ego and group consciousness, Oristelli's right and left hemispheres of the brain ... the list proliferates. It is true that some encouragement for this line of argument may have been derived from Peter Zinkov's

bizarre libretto for Birtwistle's as yet unperformed opera, *The Mask of Orpheus* - a work, needless to say, about "life and death, fact and fantasy ... Man (or Hero) and Myth", enacted upon two stage levels conjoined by two rivers, "one horizontal, the other vertical" (sic). But in general, these oppositions are left too unrefined. The forms, for example, may be static, but the effect of the large scores of the 1970s is often powerfully teleological. And Birtwistle himself seems not to have entertained the thought that the literal restatements of Messiaen's scores, far from representing impoverished composition, create tension precisely by denying the impulse for organic change.

Aspart from this, Hall's work is spirited rather than thorough. There are some good minor works that go unexplored, especially the haunting film-score for Sidney Lumet's *The Offence* (1973). Webern's early music, which Birtwistle taught at the Royal Academy of Music, should be cited as an important source for the handling of monody. Nevertheless, it is good that there is, at last, a study of this composer, and that its useful catalogue of works has also been issued independently by Birtwistle's music publishers, Universal Edition.

From the outside

Eric Sams

WALTER FRISCH (Editor)
Johannes Brahms: Alto Rhapsody, Opus 53
A facsimile of the autograph score
76pp. The New York Public Library;
distributed by Publishing Center for Cultural
Resources, 625 Broadway, New York,
NY 10012, USA. \$50.
0871042835

As a his choice of song-texts shows, Brahms had a special fondness for mothers and daughters and their confidential conversations; he was also much obsessed with thoughts of isolation, exclusion and loneliness. At the confluence of all these highly personal feelings we find the *Alto Rhapsody* of 1869, inspired by his frustratingly divisive love for Clara Schumann and her twenty-three-year-old daughter Julie. Neither was for him; he always remained the longing loner, the odd outsider. To attain the intense verbal inwardness he needed, Brahms gutted Goethe's obscure elegy of ostracism *Harzreise im Winter*. The three stanzas thus arbitrarily excerpted are far more self-expressive than self-explanatory; their abrupt beginning, for example, "But who is this to one side?", must be music's most perplexing plunge in *medias res*. So here is a work much in need of commentary, with a manuscript long overdue for illumination. The only extant autograph belongs to the New York Public Library, which issued

Hotter gossip

Michael Tanner

FENELOPE TURING
Hans Hotter: Man and artist
280pp. Calder. £10.95
0714539980

A good critical biography of Hans Hotter would be a valuable book. He made his debut as the speaker in *Die Zauberflöte* in 1930, and last year scored a sensational success as Schigolch in *Lulu* in Vienna; anyone who heard the broadcast might well have wondered why he isn't still singing Gurnemann. He has lived and worked through a period in which styles of operatic production, ways of interpreting Lieder, and the reputation of Wagner, with whom he has always been most closely associated, though not by his own wish, have all changed radically. As well as being a supreme singer, actor, he has produced many operas with considerable success, and for the last decade or so has held master-classes which are notable for the extraordinary inspiration they generate. He is so intelligent, articulate, warm, wide-ranging and humane, and above all so keen that the participants in his classes

Comings and goings

Rupert Christiansen

RICHARD BURBANK
Twentieth Century Music
485pp. Thames and Hudson. £20.
0500013349

Chronology is no longer the dominating principle in our conceptions of history, and the fin-footedness of a book like this, relentlessly plodding through twentieth-century music, can only reinforce the prejudice against it. Dividing each year under the headings of "Opera", "Dance", "Instrumental and Vocal", "Births, Deaths, and Debuts" and "Related Events", it gives day-by-day listings of what Richard Burbank has considered to be significant musical comings and goings. Lavishly produced, well indexed, and generally accurate, it turns out to be almost completely useless as a reference book and not even good value as an entertaining browse.

A primary objection to the volume is its false identification of the epoch of "modern music" with "the twentieth century". If we are to have a chronology of modern music, then we ought to have a starting-point rather more seminal

this facsimile edition as part of the 150th Brahms anniversary celebrations. Its forty-four clearly reproduced pages, with the various touches of pen, pencil and crayon well-defined and differentiated, are augmented by two sketch leaves from a Vienna collection and prefaced by a twenty-page account of the work's genesis, structure and sources, together with a technical description of the manuscript.

Such publications make masterpieces doubly accessible, by reproduction and by commentary. They also provide a show-case for the display of modern musicology. Walter Frisch has provided an exemplary model of what needs to be said and how to say it. That makes the occasional slight blemishes all the more unfortunate. Goethe's text is inadequately translated (among other infelicities, "ward" is "became" rather than "was", and "vernehmlich" is just "audible", not "pleasant") and inaccurately punctuated. Commas may seem small points; but fifty dollars is a lousy sum. For that money, we might also have been told that not only the first four but the last four notes of "acht, wer hellat die Schmerzen" are a thematic transformation of the opening motif. Again, the adagio melody is not just used as the chaconne bass of the *Neue Liebeslieder* finale but also sung there, surely with a deliberate verbal and personal significance well worth elucidating. In general, though, the essential tasks of promulgation and exegesis are definitively discharged by this edition, which other learned libraries should follow in every sense.

should develop their own performing personalities, that he provides a most welcome contrast to other celebrated practitioners.

What is most important now is to listen to Hotter's records: to hear his Wotan (on one of the complete cycles of the *Ring* from Bayreuth published by Melodram; where he is much better accompanied, and has far finer colleagues, than on the Decca *Ring*) is to realize immediately how absurd current productions of the work are in which Wotan is portrayed as a weak and broken figure. Equally important, to hear any of his four recordings of *Die Winterreise* is to be reminded of the importance of maintaining a line, a clear legato in the classic tradition, which credits the listener with enough intelligence to understand the import of the work without the need to bark, pounce on isolated words, whisper and whimper which Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the leading contemporary interpreter of the cycle, finds appropriate to the style and everything else he sings - which is to say everything. All the qualities still on display in Hotter's master-classes are equally apparent in his singing.

Alas, Fenelope Turing shows no qualifications for writing helpfully about Hotter. She has produced a chatty account of his life, with

than the day on which J. P. Sousa's *Cherry and the Wonderful Lamp* was given its premiere. A chronology stretching from, say, *Tristram and Isolde* might have some coherence; 1900 to 1979 does not. Nicolas Slonimsky's unbalanced and facetious introduction compounds the fallacy with some extraordinarily naïve statements, such as that "the 20th Century marked a revolution in the style and technique of musical composition greater than in any century before"; that "until the very end of the 19th Century the unbreakable rule of composition was that each separate, individual section, each movement and certainly the complete work itself has to terminate on a perfect triad"; and most misleading of all, as if during thousands of years of developing musical praxis, that "on the threshold of the 20th Century the musical ground began to shift".

Nor does the rigidity of the headings clarify anything much. "Orchestral" is awkwardly distinguished from "Instrumental and Vocal", while "Births, Deaths, and Debuts" get prominence unwarranted by their significance as musical occasions - does anyone really need to know that "mezzo-soprano Gladys Swarthout" was born in Deepwater, Missouri, on December 25, 1900? The "Related Events" section is particularly weak, including for example the temporary closure of the Imperial Opera House in Petrograd (owing to winter weather conditions) but failing to notice the beginning of the BBC's sponsorship of the Proms or Boulez's appointment to IRCAM.

Burbank deadens his book further by sticking firmly (and without an initial apology for his limitations of scope) to the accepted parameters of "serious" or "classical" music in an era of exceptional fluidity and intermedialism, there is virtually nothing about music east of the Soviet Union or south of Europe, only the bare minimum of jazz, and a total exclusion of pop and rock music.

The lack of substance and flexibility of structure is far more disabling than the inevitable quota of mistakes and omissions (Shostakovich and Rawsthorne apparently alive and well in 1979, Marie Collier taking singing lessons from Melba between birth and her second birthday, *Aida* still being written for the opening of the Suez Canal). As such books go, this one comes off as pretty scrupulous, although the complete lack of accents or diacritical marks in the text is deplorable. (Here, as in so many other respects, Michael Kennedy's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* is authoritative.)

It all amounts to a regrettably wasted opportunity. Music history desperately needs new perspectives, a worked-out sociology, and a much stronger sense of the relationship between composition and the institutions of patronage and performance. Richard Burbank has ended by doing little more than farflung out an enormous amount of previously observed material and dumping it on the reader in the least imaginative or helpful way.

many an unilluminating anecdote, innumerable errors of fact (on page 128, for instance, she says that Clemens Krauss conducted *Parzifal* in Bayreuth in 1955, whereas actually he died in 1954; three lines later she says that Böhm conducted *Parzifal* in 1965, but it was André Cluytens; Böhm never conducted the work at Bayreuth; the book is all like that), work at Bayreuth; the book is all like that), painting clichés, everything in the style of a gossip-column. The only interesting and valuable parts of the book are those considerable stretches where she got Hotter (Hans to her) to talk about his life and work, and even those could have been better if the questions had been more pointed; she seems simply to have asked him to reminisce, and so he has no prompting to say anything specific about particular roles or artists.

Lieder: An introduction to German Song (203pp. Julia MacRae. £12.99. 0 86033 122 7) by Kenneth Whittington, with a foreword by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, has recently been published. It is in four parts: "The Development of the German Lied", "Performer and Audience", "Twenty-Five Popular Lieder", "Background and Performance" and "Lieder of the Future".

Unstopping recollections

James Kirkup

KENZABURO Oe (Editor)
Atomic Aftermath: Short stories about
Hiroshima and Nagasaki
213pp. Tokyo: Shueisha Press. ¥1200.
408 7730573

The stories in *Atomic Aftermath* are by both professional writers and those many victims of the A-bombs or their children - "second-generation survivors" - who have written spontaneously direct and truthful descriptions of their experiences in poems, essays, stories and autobiographies. Such untutored writings speak with the realism of the common people, and act as therapies and warnings. No one who reads Tamiki Hara's "Summer Flower" - a personal account of the devastation of Hiroshima on that fatal morning of August 6 - could ever deny the folly of our present arms race: the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

were playthings compared with the monsters being stockpiled today. Katsuzo Oda's "Humen Ashes" is a similar account of that day in Hiroshima, almost unbearable in its realism, and related with the kind of helpless horror and indignation perhaps possible only in a non-professional writer uninfluenced by preconceived notions about how such events should be artistically described. Indeed, it is their lack of art, in the traditional sense, that makes these writers unforgettable, for the intensity of their suffering has not made them blind to the universal significance of that primal vision of man's inhumanity to man.

The stories by the professionals are no less striking, though in a completely different vein, with a literary self-consciousness that tends to make them feel rather lightweight. Masuji Ibuse's "The Crazy Iris" and Kyoko Hayashi's "The Empty Can" are among the best. But the most poignant and bitter of them, in a Japan where discrimination and class-consciousness

Unmeeting summits

Oliver Bowcock

KOSUKE KOYAMA
Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A pilgrimage in
theology
273pp. SCM Press. Paperback, £6.50.
0334010543

Kosuke Koyama is a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York. A Japanese, baptized into the Christian faith during the Second World War, shortly before the fire-bomb raids on Tokyo, he is well placed to compare the two cultures presented in this book. His "pilgrimage" charts a journey from the spiritual and aesthetic tradition of Mount Fuji to the theologically exigent one of Sinai. It concludes with a fundamentalist Christian commitment.

This use of mountains as symbols is typical of the somewhat glib way in which Koyama reviews his subject. A result of this simplification is an occasionally patronizing tone and an uneven fabric to the book. Copious Old Testament references are juxtaposed with jazzy American phrases, and the argument mixes the esoteric with the banal. Koyama aims to de-

monstrate an involved faith (he emphasizes the "impassioned" nature of God in human affairs), but the effect is unfortunate. Shortly put, he attempts too much. His own experience has led him through cultural terrains vaster than those of most of his readers; extensive exposition of both Japanese and Christian traditions is inevitable. Good autobiography tells the author's experiences and may leave the reader with a final impression of moral opinions. In *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai* the process has been reversed: Koyama dwells upon the philosophy and only conveys hints of a life being lived. A pilgrimage, even one in theology, is active as well as spiritual.

Consequently the book is thought-provoking rather than convincing, though considerations within it certainly demand attention. Koyama sees the Japanese government before the Second World War as idolatrous; perverting the strict structure of Confucian rule to suit its own ends. An idolatrous nation, he argues, is one which enforces the combination of sacrifice by its people and oppression of others to consolidate the country's position. This is an accusation that some, despite Nakasone's foreign policy changes and the much-vaunted peace clause in the Constitution, would still level at Japan today. The logical conclusion of

take so many forms, is Mitsuharu Inoue's "The House of Hands", about the pitiless discrimination against "the never-stop people" - A-bomb victims who never stop bleeding, and for whom marriage, that most sacred of all Japan's stultifying conventions, is out of the question. The story opens with an epigraph giving the words of an anonymous countrywoman from a village in Nagasaki Prefecture: "Nobody's going to marry those Nagasaki girls ... Those people are outcasts - damned Untouchables."

The editor, Kenzaburo Oe, has made a discriminating choice in this anthology, illustrated by gritty documentary photographs and reproductions from the haunting "Hiroshima Panels" of Iri and Toshi Maruki, the only works of artistic distinction in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. The translations, by Burton Watson, John Bester, David L. Swain, George Saito and others, are stylish and carry conviction.

Koyama's argument is that the atomic bombings were a judgment of God upon the Japanese; he insists only just before making such a controversial statement.

His approach to the subject of atomic weapons, however, displays a deeper sensitivity. It is interesting that he considers these views of his as tempered by Buddhism and its cyclical view of history. He sees the Western (specifically American) approach to nuclear arms as confrontational and as ignoring God's involvement in human affairs. President Reagan (quoted in the book) holds the West to be free and good, with the corollary of Russia's being tyrannical and evil. This allows no scope for the idea of history as a record of God's, as well as human, experience. Koyama's hypothesis is that if Reagan is correct, and the atomic stockpiles are as high as we are told, then God is probably dead.

There are flashes of stimulating thought in the book; its flaws arise from Koyama's inability to exploit fully his own territory - for this, perhaps, one needs to look to the Japanese Catholic writer Shusaku Endo (whose latest volume of short stories is reviewed on p. 1223 of this issue). It demonstrates nevertheless an ardent, engaged theological concern and an unusual involvement of East and West.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 197
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 16. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 197" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. It was the morning of my hundredth birthday. I shaved the final mirror-disk of old tired face under the merciless glare of the bathroom lighting. . . . I dabbed a soda-slick at the razor nicks. In the magnifying mirror it looked like a white rocket landing on the uncharted side of the moon.
2. He had almost forgotten what it was like to shave with a new blade, having - for nearly a year now - used the old ones stacked up by the previous tenant on top of the bathroom cupboard. This morning he slashed his cheeks, underlip, and Adam's apple: shaving-soap froth became childhood ice-cream sprinkled with raspberry vinegar.
3. My Adam's apple is a prickly pear: Now I shall speak of evil and despair. As none has spoken. Five, six, seven, eight. Nine strokes are not enough. Ten. I palpate through strawberry-and-cream the gory mess And find unchanged that patch of prickliness.

Competition No 193
Winner: Dan Jacobson
Answers:

1. I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean towards her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.
2. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby*, chapter 1. She had the softest voice that ever was heard; and her nose, stupendously aquiline, had a little knob in the very centre or keystone of the bridge.
3. Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, chapter 1. Her voice ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman! Shakespeare, *King Lear*, V. iii.

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